Getting Ready for the Workplace

Instructor's Manual

By Jeffrey Kahn, Getting Ready for the Workplace

StrategiesForTheWorkplace@gmail.com

and

Gerry Hanley, Ph.D. Center for Usability in Design and Accessibility

California State University Long Beach

Gerry.hanley@csulb.edu

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Table of Contents

Introduction 3
Selecting Articles 5
Suggested Assignment – Read, Summarize, and Present 7
Students Using AI Tools 10
Suggested Assignment – Improve An Article Using AI 12
Suggested Assignment – Role Play 14
Suggested Assignment – Authoring and Article 18

Introduction

"Getting Ready for the Workplace" is a collection of 50 short articles that foster employability skills and is intended for college students and others preparing to enter the professional workforce. Content is organized into 8 subjects:

- Clear and Effective Communication
- Getting Your Job Done
- Personal Development or Growth
- Productive Teamwork and Collaboration
- Critical Thinking and Analysis
- Decision-Making and Negotiation
- Relevant Technical Literacy
- Career Planning

Success on the first rung of the workplace ladder depends on being able to cope with the novel demands, responsibilities, and expectations of a professional job. The ability to adapt and the resilience to survive and thrive in this new environment comes from being exposed to the 'workplace curriculum' beforehand. The material in "Getting Ready for the Workplace" prepares students to spot typical situations, name and describe them using the language of business, and have in hand time-tested methods of analysis and decision-making. Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.

Each article offers a brief introduction that frames a topic; a longer application section follows that digs deeper into the subject, comments on related issues, and often includes specific strategies for performing well.

The key take-away from each article is set off in a box.

Working through the material helps the student master and demonstrate **employability skills** and good practices. For example, a section on communication is really about *clear and effective* communication. *Communicating* is not difficult; being *clear* is harder. Conveying your message in the appropriate time, place, and manner and in a way that the audience understands unambiguously what you are providing, whether it be a request, background information, or the like, is not so simple. The purpose of business communication is to be understood.

Clear communication means that what you intended to say and what the audience heard and understood aligned well. Similarly, any old communication has a poor chance of being *effective*. When you communicate, you want something to change as a result of having communicated. Perhaps, you want a manager to approve a project, or you want to provide a progress report, or you want to establish rules of engagement with a business partner. *Effective* communication gets the job done without misunderstanding, wasted back-and-forth, matches expectations and so on.

In the same vein, teamwork is not difficult. After all, you can be on a team without too much effort. The challenge is to be a *useful* member of a team and to have a *productive* collaboration.

This manual offers resources to help instructors create gradable assignments based on the articles, leading to students developing and then demonstrating employability skills.

Note that "Getting Ready for the Workplace" is a subset of a larger body of work, "Strategies for the Workplace", which includes over 200 articles covering these topics in more detail. The strategies book also includes circumstances students are unlikely to encounter before entering the workplace, such as conducting themselves in an office or commercial environment, being in a paid position and subject to performance reviews, being part of a management hierarchy, working with business partners, dealing with budgets, and so on. Nevertheless, consider sampling "Strategies for the Workplace" as an option.

Consider Recommending the Print Edition

This material is intended as a student workbook that should be used as such. The idea is to encourage students to underline, highlight, circle, or otherwise mark what is important. In the print edition, many of the articles have whitespace at the end, which is a great place to take notes. The book does not have to be left untouched. Further, once students have joined the workplace, they can revisit the book and should find content that is directly applicable.

Selecting Articles

This book contains a lot of material. How much material to assign may depend on the centrality of this curriculum to the overall focus of the course. For example:

Employability skills are the focus of the course

The entire collection of 50 articles across 8 subjects may be appropriate. Consider consuming all the articles on a given subject as a unit. For a structured approach:

- **Start with Communication** – These articles are useful throughout any course.
- **Follow with Teamwork & Collaboration** – A natural next step, especially for group work.
- **Then explore Personal Development, Getting the Job Done, and Critical Thinking** – These sections can be used in any order.
- **Use Negotiation as a Special Module** – It stands alone well and works great with role-play exercises.
- **Incorporate Technical Literacy** (e.g. finance or statistics) as needed based on students' academic background.
- **End with Career Planning** – Perfect for wrapping up the course as students think about life after school.

All article titles are unique, so it's best to reference them by title rather than page number—especially helpful across different formats like print, Kindle, VitalSource, or podcast.

Employability Skills support or enhance the course

You don't need to assign all 50 articles. Choose specific ones that complement your lessons or support projects and presentations.

Tips:

- Assign a full topic group (e.g. Communication or Critical Thinking) that aligns with your course goals.
- Let **students choose** from a small set of 3–5 articles to read as this can give insight into what they feel they need help with (e.g. communication, confidence, financial literacy).
- Use their choices to guide class discussions and future curriculum planning.
- Encourage students to **rate articles for relevance**. This feedback can help shape future classes.
- Consider weekly assignments: one article, one reflection post, and optional peer comments. This keeps engagement steady and encourages deeper thinking. Making a public presentation is also a great practice.

Employability Skills are supplementary, optional, or other material

You can still use the material in creative ways:

- Have students (or small groups) pick an article, summarize it, and present their thoughts.
- Allow students to choose a topic and write about it from their own perspective.
- Use it for **honors** assignments or extra credit activities.

Suggested Assignment – Read, Summarize, and Present

Description: Read, reflect, summarize, and present the topic covered in an article.

Learning Objective: **Clear and Effective Communication**

This assignment fosters **reading comprehension** as the student reads the entire article, which is written using language suitable for a college-level course. Critically, the student demonstrates comprehension by **summarizing** the article into a single paragraph (analogous to creating an abstract or catalog entry). The summary shows higher-order thinking:

- **Analyzing**: The breaking down of text to understand its meaning.
- **Evaluating**: Judging the relevance and effectiveness of the text.
- **Synthesizing**: Combining information from different parts of the text into a new, shorter artifact.

Given the assignment's instructions are written, a student would demonstrate **following directions** by completing the work as required.

Objective:

Choose a meaningful article, summarize its main points, and present your summary in a clear, visually engaging PowerPoint presentation.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Read and Understand It

- Read the article carefully at least twice.
- Highlight or note:
  - The **main idea**
  - **Supporting points**
  - Any **key facts, quotes, or data**

---

2. Summarize the Article

Write a short summary (in your own words – not using AI) that includes:

- The **main idea** (What's the article about?)

- 2–4 key points or takeaways
- Why it matters (optional: Why should we care about this?)

Tip: Keep your summary clear and to the point and aim for around 100–200 words.

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3. (Optional) Create Your PowerPoint

Use slides to turn your summary into a visual presentation. Suggested slide layout:

1. **Title Slide** – Article title, author, your name, date
2. **Introduction** – What is the article about?
3. **Main Idea** – A clear statement of the article's purpose or argument
4. **Key Points** – 2–3 slides explaining the main takeaways
5. **Why It Matters** – Relevance or impact of the topic
6. **Your Thoughts** – (Optional) Do you agree? What surprised you?
7. **Conclusion Slide** – One final summary or takeaway

Use visuals, bullet points, and simple text to make it engaging.

Note any number of slides (even just one) is acceptable. Only include the number of slides you need to be effective.

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4. Present

- Be ready to present your summary, PowerPoint, or other material to the class or submit a recorded version (if required).
- Speak clearly, keep it under 5 minutes, and explain the article as if you're teaching it to someone new.

Reminders

- Don't copy-paste: Use your own words.
- Check spelling, grammar, and formatting.
- Practice your presentation at least once.

Rubric

Category	4 – Excellent	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Needs Improvement
Article Selection	Article is relevant, appropriate, and clearly approved/identified.	Article is mostly appropriate and relevant.	Article is weakly connected or not fully appropriate.	No article chosen or very off-topic.
Summary Content	Main idea and key points clearly explained in own words; insightful and accurate.	Summary mostly in own words, covers main idea and key points.	Some details present, but summary is vague, incomplete, or unclear.	Summary is missing, copied, or inaccurate.
Organization & Clarity	Presentation flows logically; ideas are easy to follow.	Mostly well-organized with some minor gaps.	Ideas are disorganized or hard to follow in places.	Presentation is hard to follow or lacks structure.
Visual Design	Slides are clean, visually engaging, and support the message well.	Slides are clear and mostly well designed.	Slides are cluttered, plain, or hard to read.	Slides lack visuals or formatting; hard to read or confusing.
Presentation Skills	Speaker is confident, clear, and engaging; stays within time.	Speaker is mostly clear; some reading or rushing.	Speaker is unclear, too quiet, or heavily relies on notes.	Speaker is hard to understand or unprepared.
Grammar & Mechanics	No grammar/spelling errors in slides or speech.	Minor errors that do not distract.	Frequent errors, some affecting clarity.	Many distracting or confusing errors.
Effort & Completion	Exceeds expectations; all parts done thoughtfully.	Completed as assigned.	Missing some elements or effort seems rushed.	Major parts missing or incomplete.

Scoring Guide (Total: 28 points)

- **24–28 points** – Outstanding
- **18–23 points** – Satisfactory
- **12–17 points** – Needs improvement
- **Below 12** – Incomplete / Revise & resubmit

Students Using AI Tools

Given the wide availability of ChatGPT, Claude, and similar artificial intelligence tools, preparing written material my become more of an exercise in how to use the tools than in composition. One option is recast the exercise into an in-class project without phones or computers, such as producing material in longhand. Note that you may need to provide accommodations and you may choose not to grade on legibility.

As an example, in response to the prompt to summarize the "Why Proofread?" article, ChatGPT produced this:

> *The article **"Why Proofread?"** emphasizes the importance of proofreading, especially in professional and formal communications. While informal text communication (like texting) tolerates grammatical and typographical irregularities, audiences—especially older or more traditional ones—expect higher standards in emails and printed materials.*
>
> *Key points include:*
>
> - ***Audience expectations matter**: Proper grammar and punctuation signal respect and professionalism.*
> - ***Poor writing can harm credibility**: Mistakes may suggest carelessness, ignorance, or lack of attention to detail.*
> - ***Error-free writing makes a good impression**: It shows effort and helps ensure your message is taken seriously.*
> - ***Proofreading is essential**: Always review your work and consider having someone else edit it, especially if others are writing on your behalf.*
>
> *In short, proofreading is a simple but powerful way to enhance the clarity, quality, and credibility of your communication.*

Further, ChatGPT suggested the following slides:

> ## *Slide 1: Title*
>
> ***Why Proofread?***
> *Enhancing Communication Through Attention to Detail*
>
> ---
>
> ## *Slide 2: The Importance of Proofreading*
>
> - *Builds credibility and professionalism*
> - *Ensures your message is clear and respected*
> - *Meets audience expectations, especially in formal contexts*

Slide 3: Informal vs. Formal Writing

- ***Informal (texts, chats):***
  Tolerates grammar/punctuation errors, acronyms, emojis, etc.
- ***Formal (emails, printed materials):***
  Demands clarity, correctness, and polish

Slide 4: Risks of Poor Proofreading

- *Seen as careless or lazy*
- *Suggests lack of skills or knowledge*
- *May cause readers to dismiss your ideas*

In time, AI tools will be able to produce content in a specific student's handwriting, videos of the student presenting material, and so on.

Conversely, rather than eschew AI, you may wish to ask students to use AI (or collaborate with AI) to improve an article, make it more suitable for a different audience, etc.

Suggested Assignment – Improve An Article Using AI

Description: Select an article and use AI tools to improve the content in some way.

Learning Objective: **Clear and Effective Communication**

This assignment fosters **proficiency with AI tools** as the student selects an AI tool and uses prompts to fashion one or more derivative works. The student demonstrates **evaluation** by working with the AI to improve the effectiveness of the text for some audience. The student demonstrates **creativity** in selecting the audience. Given the assignment's instructions are written, a student would demonstrate **following directions** by completing the work as required.

Suggested Instructions:

"*Select one of the articles in Getting Ready for the Workplace. Use an AI tool to rewrite the article in a different tone, for a different audience, from a different perspective, or however you wish. Explain why you chose the audience you did and the prompts you did. Present the original and the derivative work and analyze what was changed and whether the AI tool was effective.*"

For example, asking ChatGPT to rework *Why Proofread* to be funny did a great job. Here is how the rewritten article closed:

> "**Final Thoughts**
>
> *Proofreading isn't just about avoiding embarrassment. It's about showing that you give a damn. It's about putting your best foot forward, not stepping in a typo and tracking it across your career.*
>
> *So before you hit "Send," "Post," or "Print"—take a minute. Read it again. Because nothing says "I'm a professional" like knowing the difference between your and you're.*"

Rubric

Grade	Description
A	You made a creative and reasonable choice of target audience and prompts to guide the AI tool to a good result. You illustrated using an elaborate prompt or successive prompts to produce the result. You correctly compared and contrasted the original and derivative work. You explained why the original suited a distinct audience yet why it would not have been as effective with the target audience as the modified text. Perhaps, you created another work that would be poorly-suited to your audience.
B	You made a reasonable choice of target audience and prompts to guide the AI tool to a good result. You correctly compared and contrasted the original and derivative work. You explained why the original suited a distinct audience yet why it would not have been as effective with the target audience as the modified text.

C	You made a poor choice of target audience or showed limited command of prompts to guide the AI tool to the result. Perhaps, you made a minimal effort. You failed to compare and contrast the original and derivative work or misunderstand how to compare and contrast. You failed to demonstrate why the derivative work does a better job than the original presenting information to your target audience.

Suggested Assignment – Role Play

The articles in the book follow a consistent format: a short framing section often calling out the key idea of the piece, followed by a longer application section that goes deeper, wider, or both. Many articles include questions a reader might want to consider asking themselves, his or her teammates, manager, staff, partner, etc. Other articles explore ways to challenge a plan, probe a proposal, game-out eventualities, and so on. All this material is useful raw material for role playing.

One student could assume the role of a staffer raising a point to another student playing the role of manager. Roles could be switched, and the two students could collaborate on an assessment of the issues and interactions to share with other students, either through a discussion board post or perhaps a short presentation.

Additionally, a pair could assume the role of manager outlining a plan to a staffer. Similarly, a student could play the role of a team member engaged in a group discussion, an employee of an organization speaking with a customer or business partner, and the like.

The goal is to gain deeper understanding both for the topic and of for professional communication and collaboration.

Description: Read an article and as a team or with a partner and act out one of the suggested interactions.

Learning Objective: **Teamwork and Collaboration**

The students demonstrate **teamwork** and **collaboration** by agreeing on which article to use, assigning roles, practicing dialog, etc. This coordination may involve **problem solving** and **negotiation**.

This assignment fosters **reading comprehension** as the student reads the entire article, which is written using language suitable for a college-level course.

Understanding what to present shows higher-order thinking:

- **Analyzing**: The breaking down of text to understand its meaning.
- **Evaluating**: Judging the relevance and effectiveness of the text.

Given the assignment's instructions are written, a student would demonstrate **following directions** by completing the work as required.

Sample instructions for role playing the "Why Proofread?" article.

Objective:

You'll explore the importance of proofreading and clear communication by acting out real-world scenarios. Through this role-play, you'll see how tone, grammar, and clarity affect how messages are received—and how people respond to them.

What You'll Do:

1. **Form Groups**
   Work in groups of 3–5. Each group member will take on a specific role.
2. **Assign Roles**
   You'll each choose (or be assigned) one of the following:
   - **The Writer** – Sends the original message or email
   - **The Reader** – Reacts to the message
   - **The Observer(s)** – Watch closely and take notes on how the message is received
   - *(Optional)* **The Editor** – Gives feedback and helps revise the message
3. **Act Out Two Versions of the Same Scenario**
   You'll be given (or create) two versions of the same message:
   - One full of errors, bad tone, or unclear writing
   - One that's well-written and proofread

   Example Scenario: A student emailing a teacher about a late assignment

4. **Perform Both Versions**
   - Act out Version A (the poorly written message)
   - Discuss reactions, impressions, and issues
   - Then act out Version B (the corrected version)
   - Compare how the reaction changes

After the Role-Play: Group Discussion

- What was your reaction to each version?
- What assumptions did you make based on the writing?
- How did tone, grammar, or clarity affect the message?
- What would you change if this were real?

What to Turn In

Each group will:

- Perform both versions for the class (or record it if done virtually)
- Fill out a short reflection sheet or answer class discussion questions

- (Optional) Submit a revised, final version of the "message" your group used

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Tips for Success

- Stay in character!
- Use body language and tone to show your reactions
- Be honest—but respectful—during discussion and feedback
- Take notes if you're the observer—you'll share your thoughts after the scene

Alternate Suggested Instructions

Variant 1: "*As a group, select one of the articles in Getting Ready for the Workplace. You may use any method you wish to choose the article. Decide how you are going to decide which article to choose. Similarly, decide how you are going to assign roles for the roll play. Feel free to be creative with how you decide things in the group. Decide how you want to play the roles, practice, and then present the role play however you wish.*"

Variant 2: "*As a group, select one of the articles from the list provided. Present a role-playing conversation around the topic covered. Switch roles and present it again.*"

For the roles of mentor and mentee, almost any article can be used as raw material, and many articles can be played as manager / team leader and staff. Some articles that have role play include:

Helpful Feedback

Make Lists Better by Adding Priority Ranking

Types of Arguments

Ask the Inverse, Reverse, or Opposite Question

Should You Halve the Difference?

Variant 3: "*Imagine you have been asked as a group to select an article for role-play. Given that you may use any method you wish to choose the article, agree on how you are going to decide how to choose an article and assign roles. Present to the class how you decided to make decisions. Included in your presentation how you decided on the presentation format. Also, discuss any issues you had in deciding how to decide or implementing your approach and how the issues were resolved. Consult the article, Group Decision Making as background.*"

This variant also demonstrates skills with ***group decision making****.*

Rubric

Category	4 – Excellent	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Needs Improvement
Preparation	Clearly prepared; knows role, scenario, and objective well; fully engaged.	Mostly prepared; understands role and context.	Somewhat prepared; limited understanding of scenario.	Unprepared or unclear on role/scenario.
Role Performance	Role played with strong realism, purpose, and detail.	Role played appropriately with some realistic behavior.	Limited role-play; breaks character or lacks detail.	Weak or no role-play; out of character or uninterested.
Communication & Delivery	Speaks clearly and confidently; uses tone/body language effectively.	Mostly clear with appropriate tone and pacing.	Difficult to hear or unclear; inconsistent tone.	Mumbles, monotone, or disengaged.
Collaboration	Works smoothly with team; listens actively and supports others' roles.	Good teamwork; responds appropriately to others.	Interacts with others but lacks strong engagement.	Disruptive, uncooperative, or passive.
Understanding of Content	Demonstrates clear understanding of the message (e.g., why proofreading matters).	Shows understanding with some depth.	Basic understanding; lacks detail or clarity.	Weak or incorrect understanding of the core message.
Reflection & Discussion	Offers thoughtful reflection or feedback after the role-play.	Gives some relevant reflection or comments.	Limited or vague reflection.	No reflection or off-topic comments.
Effort & Participation	Fully involved from start to finish; takes assignment seriously.	Participates with good effort.	Participates with minimal effort.	Little to no participation or effort.

Scoring Guide (Total: 28 points)

- **24–28 points** – Excellent performance
- **18–23 points** – Satisfactory
- **12–17 points** – Needs more engagement
- **Below 12** – Incomplete / Revise and retry

Suggested Assignment – Authoring and Article

In Scouting, there is a skills-acquisition best practice called, "Watch one, do one, teach one"; see the article of the same name. For example, one learns how to tie a particular knot first by hearing the knot's purpose and seeing the knot tied by someone else. Next, the scout tries to tie the knot himself, often coming to realize that every step is critical or that some operation is more subtle than appeared at first. Once the scout is proficient the final step is to reach another scout how to tie the knot. Again, the teaching scout often comes to appreciate the subject more fully through the process.

The idea is that receiving information passively has value but so does practicing a skill and imparting a skill to another person. In this spirit, students could be asked to reflect on some of the articles in the collection and create a new article on another facet of the same topic or on a different topic. Once drafted, the student should enlist an initial copyeditor / reviewer. The refined draft could be circulated to a larger group for feedback. A final version of the text could be presented to the entire class.

In addition to the authoring task, which has merit of its own, the student will learn about the critical drafting and review process as well as more formal presentation of completed work.

Description: Reflect on an employability skill you have, and others might want to develop and demonstrate. Write an article on the topic.

Learning Objective: ***Clear and Effective Communication***

This assignment fosters ***reading comprehension*** *as the student reads the entire article, which is written using language suitable for a college-level course. Critically, the student demonstrates comprehension by* ***summarizing*** *the article into a single paragraph (analogous to creating an abstract or catalog entry). The summary shows higher-order thinking:*

- ***Analyzing****: The breaking down of text to understand its meaning.*
- ***Evaluating****: Judging the relevance and effectiveness of the text.*
- ***Synthesizing****: Combining information from different parts of the text into a new, shorter artifact.*

Given the assignment's instructions are written, a student would demonstrate ***following directions*** *by completing the work as required.*

Objective:

Write an original article that explains why a certain skill, habit, or value is important. Your goal is to inform, persuade, and engage your reader.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Choose Your Topic

Pick a topic you believe people should care more about. It should be something small but meaningful—an everyday skill, habit, or behavior that makes a difference.

Examples:

- *Why Be On Time?*
- *Why Ask Questions?*
- *Why Stay Organized?*
- *Why Speak Up?*
- *Why Finish What You Start?*
- *Why Say Thank You?*

*Choose something **you believe in** or have experience with.*

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2. Know Your Audience

Think about who you're writing for. Your tone and examples might change depending on whether you're speaking to:

- *Other students*
- *Teachers or professionals*
- *The general public*

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3. Plan Your Structure

Follow this outline to keep your article focused and clear:

Introduction

- *Catch the reader's attention*
- *Introduce the topic*

- *Explain why it matters in a general way*

Why It Matters

- *Who notices or is affected when someone does or doesn't do this?*
- *What can go wrong without it?*

Benefits

- *What are the personal or professional benefits of doing this well?*
- *Why should people care?*

Real-Life Examples

- *Share a situation, story, or moment that proves your point*

Practical Advice

- *Give 2–3 tips for how someone can improve this skill or habit*

Conclusion

- *Wrap it up with a final thought or call to action*

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4. Use Your Voice

*Your article should sound like **you**. You can:*

- *Use a friendly or serious tone*
- *Add a little humor (if it fits your audience)*
- *Be persuasive, but respectful*

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5. Revise and Proofread

- *Check for grammar, punctuation, and flow*
- *Read it out loud to catch awkward parts*
- *Ask someone to read it and give feedback*

What to Submit

- *A well-organized article (300–600 words)*
- *Typed or handwritten (as directed)*
- *Clear title:* ***"Why [your topic here]"***

Bonus Challenge (Optional)

- *Turn your article into a poster, short video, podcast, or slide deck*

Rubric

Category	***4 – Excellent***	***3 – Proficient***	***2 – Developing***	***1 – Needs Improvement***
Content & Message	*Topic is highly relevant, clearly explained, and thoughtfully explored.*	*Topic is relevant and mostly clear; message is developed.*	*Topic is somewhat unclear or shallowly addressed.*	*Topic is unclear, missing, or not developed.*
Structure & Organization	*Follows logical structure (intro, audience, consequences, benefits, tips, close). Transitions are smooth.*	*Structure is mostly clear; some parts may be uneven or slightly disorganized.*	*Organization is weak; some parts missing or out of order.*	*No clear structure; hard to follow.*
Reasoning & Examples	*Strong, convincing reasoning with relevant, specific examples or scenarios.*	*Good reasoning with at least one example.*	*Basic reasoning; examples may be vague or underdeveloped.*	*Little to no reasoning or examples.*
Audience Awareness	*Tone, style, and voice are highly appropriate for intended audience.*	*Tone and style mostly fit the audience.*	*Some awareness of audience, but tone may be inconsistent.*	*Little to no audience awareness; tone is inappropriate or confusing.*
Language & Grammar	*Virtually no errors; writing is polished and clear.*	*Few minor errors; writing is generally clear and correct.*	*Several errors that sometimes distract from meaning.*	*Frequent errors that interfere with understanding.*

Category	***4 – Excellent***	***3 – Proficient***	***2 – Developing***	***1 – Needs Improvement***
Creativity & Voice	*Writing is engaging, original, and shows strong personal voice.*	*Some personality or originality is present.*	*Tone is flat or too generic; limited voice.*	*Writing lacks personality or effort.*
Effort & Completion	*Exceeds expectations; all parts completed thoughtfully.*	*Meets expectations; all parts completed.*	*Missing one or more required elements.*	*Incomplete or appears rushed.*

Scoring Guide (Total: 28 points)

- ***24–28:*** *Outstanding – Ready to publish!*
- ***18–23:*** *Solid – Good effort with room to grow*
- ***12–17:*** *Needs improvement – Rework needed*
- ***Below 12:*** *Incomplete or off-target*