

Name: _____ Date: _____

Rubric for Argument Writing—Eighth Grade

	Grade 6 (1 POINT)	1.5 PTS	Grade 7 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 8 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 9 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
STRUCTURE								
Overall	The writer explained the topic/text and staked out a position that could be supported by a variety of trustworthy sources. Each part of the writer’s text helped build her argument, and led to a conclusion.	Mid-level	The writer laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a bigger conversation about a topic/text. He acknowledged positions on the topic or text that might disagree with his own position, but still showed why his position makes sense.	Mid-level	The writer laid out an argument about a topic/text and made it clear why her particular argument is important and valid. She stayed fair to those who might disagree with her by describing how her position is one of several and making it clear where her position stands in relation to others.	Mid-level	The writer presented an argument, offering context, honoring other points of view, and indicating the conditions under which the position holds true. The writer developed the argument with logical reasoning and convincing evidence, acknowledging the limitations of the position and citing—and critiquing—sources.	
Lead	The writer wrote an introduction to interest readers and help them understand and care about a topic or text. She thought backward between the piece and the introduction to make sure that the introduction fit with the whole. Not only did the writer clearly state her claim, she also told her readers how her text would unfold.	Mid-level	The writer interested readers in his argument and helped them to understand the backstory behind it. He gave the backstory in a way that got readers ready to see his point. The writer made it clear to readers what his piece would argue and forecasted the parts of his argument.	Mid-level	After hooking her readers, the writer provided specific context for her own as well as another’s position(s), introduced her position, and oriented readers to the overall line of argument she would develop.	Mid-level	The writer demonstrated the significance of the argument and may have offered hints of upcoming parts of the essay. The writer presented needed background information to show the complexity of the issue. In addition to introducing the overall line of development the argument will take, the writer distinguished that argument from others.	

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STRUCTURE (cont.)								
Transitions	<p>The writer used transitions to help readers understand how the different parts of her piece fit together to explain and support her argument.</p> <p>The writer used transitions to help connect claim(s), reasons, and evidence, and to imply relationships such as when material exemplifies, adds on to, is similar to, explains, is a result of, or contrasts. She used transitions such as <i>for instance, in addition, one reason, furthermore, according to, this evidence suggests, and thus we can say that.</i></p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer used transitions to link the parts of her argument. The transitions help readers follow from part to part and make it clear when she is stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, or offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as <i>the text states, as, this means, another reason, some people may say, but, nevertheless, and on the other hand.</i></p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer used transitions to lead readers across parts of the text and to help them note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts. He used phrases such as <i>now some argue, while this may be true, it is also the case that, despite this, as stated earlier, taken as a whole, this is significant because, the evidence points to, and by doing so.</i></p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer used transitions to clarify the relationship between claims, reasons, and evidence, and help the reader follow the logic in the argument. The writer also used transitions to make clear the relationship of sources to each other and to the claim, such as <i>while it may be true that, nevertheless, there are times when/certain circumstances when, and others echo this idea.</i></p>	
Ending	<p>In her conclusion, the writer restated the important points and offered a final insight or implication for readers to consider. The ending strengthened the overall argument.</p>	Mid-level	<p>In his conclusion, the writer reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that made the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion reiterated how the support for his claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restated the main points, responded to them, or highlighted their significance.</p>	Mid-level	<p>In the conclusion, the writer described the significance of her argument for stakeholders or offered additional insights, implications, questions, or challenges.</p>	Mid-level	<p>In the concluding section, the writer may have clarified the conditions under which the position holds true, discussed possible applications or consequences, and/or offered possible solutions.</p>	
Organization	<p>The writer organized her argument into sections: She arranged reasons and evidence purposefully, leading readers from one claim or reason to another.</p> <p>The order of the sections and the internal structure of each section the writer used made sense.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer purposely arranged parts of her piece to suit her purpose and to lead readers from one claim, counterclaim, reason, or piece of evidence to another.</p> <p>The writer used topic sentences, transitions, and formatting (where appropriate) to clarify the structure of the piece and to highlight her main points.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer organized claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence into sections and clarified how sections are connected.</p> <p>The writer created an organizational structure that supports a reader's growing understanding across the whole of his argument, arranging the sections to build on each other in a logical, compelling fashion.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer created a logical and compelling structure for the argument so that each part builds on a prior section, and the whole moves the reader toward understandings.</p>	
								TOTAL:

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DEVELOPMENT								
Elaboration*	<p>The writer included and arranged a variety of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions.</p> <p>The writer used trusted sources and information from experts and gave the sources credit.</p> <p>The writer worked to explain how the reasons and evidence she gave supported her claim(s) and strengthened her argument. To do this, she may have referred to earlier parts of her text, summarized background information, raised questions, or highlighted possible implications.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer included varied kinds of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. He analyzed or explained the reasons and evidence, showing how they fit with his claim(s) and built his argument.</p> <p>The writer consistently incorporated and cited trustworthy sources.</p> <p>The writer wrote about another possible position or positions—a different claim or claims about this subject—and explained why the evidence for his position outweighed the counterclaim(s).</p> <p>The writer worked to make his argument compelling as well as understandable. He brought out why it mattered and why the audience should care about it.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer brought out the aspects of the argument that were most significant to her audience and to her overall purpose(s).</p> <p>The writer incorporated trustworthy and significant sources and explained if and when a source seemed problematic.</p> <p>The writer analyzed the relevance of the reasons and evidence for her claims as well as for the counterclaim(s) and helped readers understand each position. The writer made sure all of her analysis led readers to follow her line of argument.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer brought out the aspects of the argument that were most significant to the audience and to the purposes. When appropriate, the writer acknowledged limitations or critiques of sources—perhaps evaluating sources’ reasoning or suspect motivations.</p> <p>The writer angled and/or framed evidence to clearly and fairly represent various perspectives, while also maintaining a clear position.</p>	
Craft*	<p>The writer chose her words carefully to support her argument and to have an effect on her reader.</p> <p>The writer worked to include concrete details, comparisons, and/or images to convey her ideas, build her argument, and keep her reader engaged.</p> <p>When necessary, the writer explained terms to readers, providing definitions, context clues, or parenthetical explanations.</p> <p>The write made her piece sound serious.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer used words purposefully to affect meaning and tone.</p> <p>The writer chose precise words and used metaphors, images, or comparisons to explain what she meant.</p> <p>The writer included domain-specific, technical vocabulary relevant to her argument and audience and defined these when appropriate.</p> <p>The writer used a formal tone, but varied it appropriately to engage the reader.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer intended to affect his reader in particular ways—to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and he chose language to do that.</p> <p>The writer consistently used comparisons, analogies, vivid examples, anecdotes, or other rhetorical devices to help readers follow his thinking and grasp the meaning and significance of a point or a piece of evidence.</p> <p>The writer varied his tone to match the different purposes of different sections of his argument.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer intended to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and chose language to do that.</p> <p>In addition to using other literary devices, the writer may have used allusions.</p> <p>The writer varied the tone to match the purposes of different sections of the argument, as well as to develop an overall impact.</p>	
								TOTAL:

*Elaboration and Craft are double-weighted categories: Whatever score a student would get in these categories is worth double the amount of points. For example, if a student exceeds expectations in Elaboration, then that student would receive 8 points instead of 4 points. If a student meets standards in Elaboration, then that student would receive 6 points instead of 3 points.

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CONVENTIONS								
Spelling	The writer used resources to be sure the words in her writing were spelled correctly, including returning to sources to check spelling.	Mid-level	The writer matched the spelling of technical vocabulary to that found in resources and text evidence. He spelled material in citations correctly.	Mid-level	The writer spelled technical vocabulary and literary vocabulary accurately. She spelled material in citations according to sources, and spelled citations accurately.	Mid-level	The writer used accurate spelling, including cited text and citations.	
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	The writer used punctuation such as dashes, colons, parentheses, and semicolons to help her include or connect information in some of her sentences. The writer punctuated quotes and citations accurately.	Mid-level	The writer varied her sentence structure, sometimes using simple and sometimes using complex sentence structure. The writer used internal punctuation appropriately within sentences and when citing sources, including commas, dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons.	Mid-level	The writer used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout his argument. The writer used verb tenses that shift when needed (as in when moving from a citation back to his own writing), deciding between active and passive voice where appropriate. The writer used internal punctuation effectively, including the use of ellipses to accurately insert excerpts from sources.	Mid-level	The writer used sentence structure and verb tense purposefully (i.e., using fragments to emphasize key points, using present tense to create immediacy). The writer used punctuation to emphasize connections, to strengthen tone, to clarify, and to add complexity.	
								TOTAL:

Teachers, we created these rubrics so you will have your own place to pull together scores of student work. You can use these assessments immediately after giving the on-demands and also for self-assessment and setting goals.

Scoring Guide

In each row, circle the descriptor in the column that matches the student work. Scores in the categories of Elaboration and Craft are worth double the point value (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 instead of 1. 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, or 4).

Total the number of points and then track students' progress by seeing when the total points increase.

Total score: _____

If you want to translate this score into a grade, you can use the provided table to score each student on a scale of 0–4.

Number of Points	Scaled Score
1–11	1
11.5–16.5	1.5
17–22	2
22.5–27.5	2.5
28–33	3
33.5–38.5	3.5
39–44	4