

# WRITING PORTFOLIO GUIDE: Kindergarten Informational Writing



Connecticut State Department of Education

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## WRITING PORTFOLIO GUIDE: Kindergarten Informational Writing

To develop and promote effective writing assessment resources that align to the Connecticut Core Standards, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) developed training materials to support classroom teachers' instruction of writing throughout the year.

This particular kindergarten guide includes a grade-appropriate text and an evidence-based writing prompt that was administered to over 120 kindergarten students representing a range of writing abilities from across Connecticut. The CSDE collected and scored their responses with guidance from the Writing Assessment Advisory Committee.

These materials can be used for classroom-, building-, or district-level training to support evidence-based student writing.

### Background

During the fall and early winter of 2017, English language arts consultants from the CSDE visited seven kindergarten classrooms in Connecticut in which the mentor text, *How to Grow a Friend*, written by Sara Gillingham, was read aloud to students. Following the reading, the class was asked to write a paper about what they could do or say to start a friendship. Students were directed to include details and examples in their writing, and then draw a picture about what someone could do to make a new friend.

Student responses were scored across three writing dimensions (Organization/Purpose, Evidence/Elaboration, and Conventions) using Connecticut-developed scoring rubrics aligned to the Smarter Balanced ELA Performance Task Writing Rubrics and the Connecticut Core Standards (CCS) for Kindergarten.

The collection represents a range in both depth and abilities. Examining student responses across the three dimensions for writing provides teachers with a closer look at individual and group strengths and weaknesses in writing. In particular, this writing prompt calls for students to use evidence-based examples in their written response. By looking more closely at the three scoring dimensions, teachers can provide students with specific tools and instruction needed to meet the grade-level expectations set in the standards.

The scoring rubrics were meant to be general and can be used with a variety of writing assignments across content areas and purposes. They can be used in part to focus on one particular dimension, such as using Evidence/Elaboration, or in their entirety to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in writing.

### Student Exemplars

The exemplar set for kindergarten informational writing contains a stimulus, an item stem, scoring rubrics, a Smarter Balanced Performance Task Conventions Scoring Chart, writing anchor papers, and a student friendly rubric.

Directions for using this ELA/Literacy guide:

1. Start by reading the stimulus and the accompanying item stem.
2. Examine the specific rubrics for each dimension and score point.
3. Read through the condition code document to better understand how to score unusual responses.
4. Read the student's response each time a new rubric is used.

## Writing Portfolio Guide Glossary

**Source:** informational or research-based texts from various academic disciplines for students to use as evidence or support in their writing.

**Item Stem/Your Assignment:** a paragraph prompting the student to create a focused written response.

**Anchor Papers:** examples of student responses and scoring comments ordered from high to low by score point. In this set of anchor papers, each student response received three annotated scores: a score for Organization/Purpose, a score for Evidence/Elaboration, and a score for Conventions.

**Scoring Rubrics:** a description of the item expectations that includes a description of response characteristics typically exhibited at each score point to ensure consistent scoring.

## Scores with Plus or Minus

Within a score point there are varying levels, from the low end of the point indicated by a minus sign, to the very high end of a score point, indicated by a plus sign. This allows us to differentiate when hand scoring between those students who are either barely within a score point and those that are close to the next score point. This additional information is beneficial when learning to score a paper and when determining next steps in instruction based on students' strengths and weaknesses.

## Kindergarten Informational Writing

**Source:** Gillingham, S. (2015). *How to Grow a Friend*. Random House, New York, NY.

**Item Stem/Your Assignment:** What could you do or say to start a friendship? Write a paper that tells how to make and care for a friend. Share details and examples in your writing. After you have finished your story, draw a picture about what someone could do to make a new friend.

## Standards

The Connecticut Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCS ELA) are grounded in evidence and designed to ensure that all students have the academic knowledge and skills they need to succeed after high school. The CCS ELA standards progression documents provide a view of learning expectations by strand and by grade level, and can be useful in understanding why the standards are sequenced the way they are across a number of grade levels. The CCS ELA K–5 writing standards progression provides a more comprehensive identification of the skills and expectations at each grade level in the writing strand, and were designed to support organizing curriculum and classroom instruction. To access the learning progression documents, visit [www.ctcorestandards.org](http://www.ctcorestandards.org).

## Kindergarten Informational Writing Scoring Rubrics

Kindergarten Informational Writing Rubric: <b>ORGANIZATION/PURPOSE</b>				
Score	4	3	2	1
<b>Organization/Purpose</b>	<p>Using mostly writing, with some drawing or dictating, the response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearly names a topic</li> <li>uses a structure that matches the purpose</li> </ul>	<p>Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing, the response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adequately names a topic</li> <li>incorporates a structure</li> </ul>	<p>Using mostly drawing or dictating with minimal writing, the response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>names a topic that may be somewhat unclear</li> <li>begins to show emerging structure</li> </ul>	<p>Using drawing, with no dictating or writing, the response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lacks a topic</li> <li>uses a random or unclear structure</li> </ul>

January 20, 2017

Kindergarten Informational Writing Rubric: <b>EVIDENCE/ELABORATION</b>				
Score	4	3	2	1
<b>Evidence/Elaboration</b>	<p>Using mostly writing, with some drawing or dictating, the response provides effective elaboration of the support/evidence for the topic. The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supplies relevant information and facts to support the topic</li> <li>• effectively uses vocabulary/language appropriate to the task</li> </ul>	<p>Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing, the response provides adequate elaboration of the support/evidence for the topic. The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supplies adequate information to support the topic</li> <li>• adequately uses vocabulary/language appropriate to the task</li> </ul>	<p>Using mostly drawing or dictating with minimal writing, the response provides some elaboration of the support/evidence for the topic. The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supplies weak information to support the topic</li> <li>• uses some vocabulary/language appropriate to the task</li> </ul>	<p>Using drawing, with no dictating or writing, the response does not provide elaboration of the support/evidence for the topic. The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supplies unrelated information or does not supply any information</li> <li>• uses vague, unclear, or confusing vocabulary/language</li> </ul>

January 20, 2017

Kindergarten Informational Writing Rubric: <b>CONVENTIONS</b>			
Score	2	1	0
<b>Conventions</b>	<p>The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions. The response demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adequate use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling</li> </ul>	<p>The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions. The response demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>limited use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling</li> </ul>	<p>The response demonstrates little or no command of conventions. The response demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>infrequent use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling</li> </ul>

January 20, 2017

<b>CONVENTIONS</b>	
<p><b>Holistic Scoring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety: A range of errors includes sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling.</li> <li>Severity: Basic errors are more heavily weighted than higher-level errors.</li> <li>Density: The proportion of errors to the amount of writing done well. This includes the ratio of errors to the length of the piece.</li> </ul>	



## Smarter Balanced — Conventions Chart — April 2014 Grades K–1

Spelling	Capitalization	Punctuation	Grammar Usage	Sentence Completion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use regular plural nouns correctly by adding /s/ or /es/ (e.g., dog, dogs; wish, wishes).</li> <li>Use conventional spelling for words with common spelling patterns and for frequently occurring irregular words.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Capitalize</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the first word in a sentence.</li> <li>the pronoun I.</li> <li>names of people.</li> <li>days of the week.</li> <li>months of the year.</li> </ul>	<p>Use <b>end punctuation</b> for sentences.</p> <p>Use <b>commas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in dates.</li> <li>to separate <b>single</b> words in a series.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Nouns:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correctly use singular and plural <b>nouns</b> with <b>matching verbs</b> in <b>basic</b> sentences (e.g., He hops; We hop).</li> </ul> <p><b>Verbs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correctly use <b>verbs</b> to convey a sense of past, present, and future (e.g., Yesterday I walked home; Today I walk home; Tomorrow I will walk home).</li> </ul> <p><b>Pronoun:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correctly use common personal, possessive, and indefinite <b>pronouns</b> (e.g., I, me, my; they, them, their; anyone, everything).</li> </ul> <p><b>Determiners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correctly use <b>determiners</b> (e.g., articles, demonstratives).</li> </ul> <p><b>Conjunctions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correctly use frequently occurring <b>conjunctions</b> (e.g., and, so, but, because).</li> </ul>	N/A

## Smarter Balanced Condition Code Categories

For the purposes of scoring open-ended responses on the summative test, including Performance Tasks, Smarter Balanced applies the following Condition Code Categories to capture those responses that do not fulfill the expectation of the test item. In some cases, a student may not provide a response, while another case may include a response unrelated to the question or topic being assessed. These codes allow the handscorer to categorize the type of response and provide more information than merely scoring it a zero.

Condition Codes	Smarter Balanced Condition Code Category Updated April 25, 2017
<b>B</b>	<p><b>Blank</b></p> <p>No response provided</p>
<b>I</b>	<p><b>Insufficient</b></p> <p>a. Student has not provided a meaningful response. Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Random keystrokes/handstrokes</li> <li>• Undecipherable text</li> <li>• <i>I hate this test</i></li> <li>• <i>I don't know, IDK</i></li> <li>• <i>I don't care</i></li> <li>• <i>I like pizza!</i> (in response to a reading passage about helicopters)</li> <li>• Response consists entirely of profanity</li> </ul> <p>b. For ELA Full Writes, use "I" code (Insufficient) for responses described above and also if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student's original work is insufficient to determine whether he or she is able to organize, cite evidence/elaborate, and use conventions as defined in the rubrics; or</li> <li>• response is too brief to determine whether it is on purpose or on topic.</li> </ul>
<b>L</b>	<p><b>Non-Scorable Language</b></p> <p>ELA/literacy: Language other than English and/or Mathematics: Language other than English or Spanish</p>
<b>T</b>	<p><b>Off Topic</b> <i>for ELA Full Writes Only</i></p> <p>Definition: A writing sample will be judged off topic when the response is unrelated to the task or the sources, or shows no evidence that the student has read the task or the sources (especially for informative/explanatory and opinion/argumentative).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Off-topic responses are generally substantial responses.</li> </ul>
<b>M</b>	<p><b>Off Purpose</b> <i>for ELA Full Writes Only</i></p> <p>Definition: A writing sample will be judged off purpose when the student has clearly not written to the purpose designated in the task.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An off-purpose response addresses the topic of the task, but not the purpose of the task.</li> <li>• Note that students may use narrative techniques in an explanatory essay or use argumentative/persuasive techniques to explain, for example, and still be on purpose.</li> <li>• Off-purpose responses are generally developed responses (essays, poems, etc.) clearly not written to the designated purpose.</li> </ul>

## Kindergarten Anchor Sets

GRADE K	P-1	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		4	4	1-



YOU CAN giv  
 SUM WUN A  
 FLOWR.  
 YOU CAN Let SUM  
 WUN PLE WIA YOU

*"You can give someone a flower.  
 You can let someone play with you."*

<p><b>4:</b> Although an introduction is missing from this response, a topic is clearly stated and a sense of structure is provided.</p>
<p><b>4:</b> The evidence is specific and relevant to the topic. The picture enhances the response.</p>
<p><b>1-:</b> The student demonstrates some understanding of sound/symbol relationships, and uses some punctuation.</p>

GRADE K	P-2	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		4-	2	1-
<p>The image shows a student's work. At the top is a drawing of two simple stick figures with circular heads and two legs each, standing side-by-side. Below the drawing is a piece of handwriting on lined paper. The first line has a wavy scribble. The second line has the words 'To be a good friend' written in a cursive-like style. The third line has 'I can play with Alex.' written in a similar style. The fourth line has some scribbles.</p>			<p><b>4-:</b> The topic is clearly stated and the response connects to the prompt.</p>	<p><b>2:</b> The student provides some support for the topic; however, the picture adds no support to the paper.</p>
			<p><b>1-:</b> The response was dictated with some words traced by the student. The student demonstrates an understanding of sound/symbol relationships in those words independently written.</p>	

*"To be a good friend, I can play with Alex."*

GRADE K	P-3	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>



FLOWERS ARE ALL 2UM  
 ALL ALL

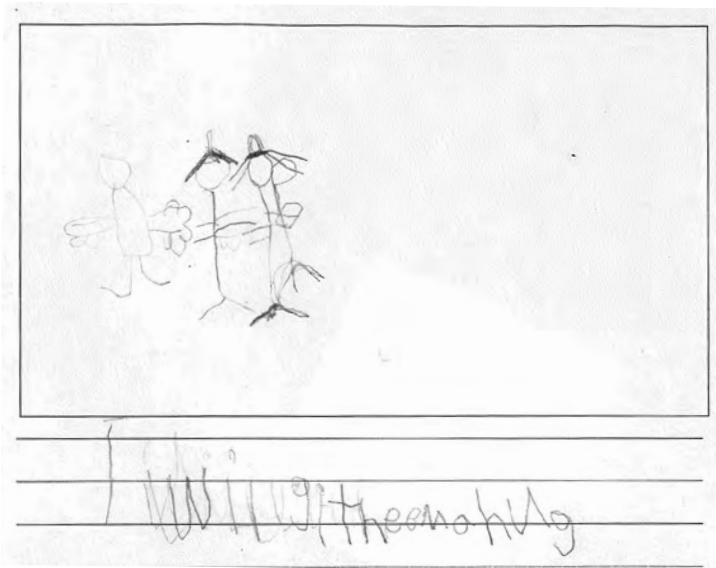
*"You can give someone a flower."*

**3:** The drawing and writing collectively provide an adequate connection to the prompt and text.

**3:** The student's drawing enhances the response.

**0:** The student demonstrates an understanding of sound/symbol relationships (*sum/some*), though there is a limited command of spelling and punctuation.

GRADE K	P-4	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		3-	3-	1




*"I will give them a hug."*

**3-:** The response provides an adequate connection to the prompt (*give them a hug*).

**3-:** The student's drawing supports the response.

**1:** This response includes correct spelling, but is missing end punctuation.

GRADE K	P-5	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		2+	4-	0
 <p>to on this in f e a d t r i n t o r z</p> <p>"Holding hands and sharing toys."</p>		2+	4-	0
		<p><b>2+:</b> The response is generally connected to the prompt (<i>holding hands; sharing toys</i>).</p>		
		<p><b>4-:</b> The student provided two pieces of information in response to the question of how to grow a friend. The picture, while simplistic, supports the evidence. The reader needs the dictation provided to clarify the student's message.</p>		
<p><b>0:</b> There is no evidence of a command of conventions in this response.</p>				

GRADE K	P-6	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		2	3	0




"I am sharing my toy."

**2:** The student did not provide a topic or context for the evidence.

**3:** The student provided adequate evidence (*sharing my toy*), and the drawing clearly supports the response.

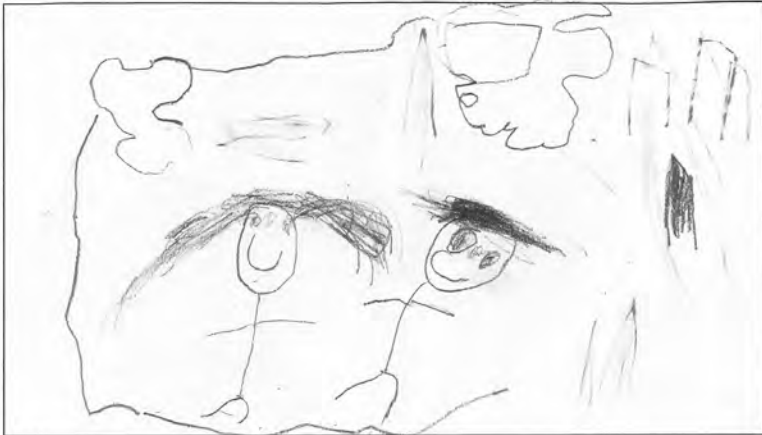
**0:** In this dictated response, the student used a capital "I" to begin the sentence. However, there is no punctuation and no evidence that the student has a command of conventions.



GRADE K	P-7	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		2	2	2-
		<p><b>2:</b> The response is not as clearly connected to the prompt. The content is consistent with the topic of friendship.</p>		
		<p><b>2:</b> The student provides evidence in an effort to respond to the prompt (<i>hug people</i>).</p>		
		<p><b>2-:</b> This response includes mostly correct spelling and end punctuation.</p>		


"I like to hug people."

GRADE K	P-8	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		2	2	0



*"We were sitting on a bench. She said, 'Do you want to come to the park?' She was all alone. She said, 'Let's play.' I ran. We ran. Let's have a party."*

<p><b>2:</b> This dictated response is a story about friendship and while it doesn't directly answer the prompt, it is on topic.</p>
<p><b>2:</b> Based on the dictation, the response contains some elaboration using dialogue.</p>
<p><b>0:</b> There is no writing provided; the response was completely dictated.</p>

GRADE K	P-9	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		2	2	0
 <p data-bbox="365 1150 711 1186">"Hug. I would hug a friend."</p>		<p data-bbox="966 485 1442 667"><b>2:</b> The student did not provide a topic or context for the evidence (<i>I would hug a friend</i>), but generally addresses the writing prompt.</p> <p data-bbox="966 709 1446 779"><b>2:</b> The picture supports the dictated response (two friends hugging).</p> <p data-bbox="966 915 1451 1020"><b>0:</b> The response was dictated and then the student copied from the dictation.</p>		

GRADE K	P-10	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		2	2	0



11/04/17

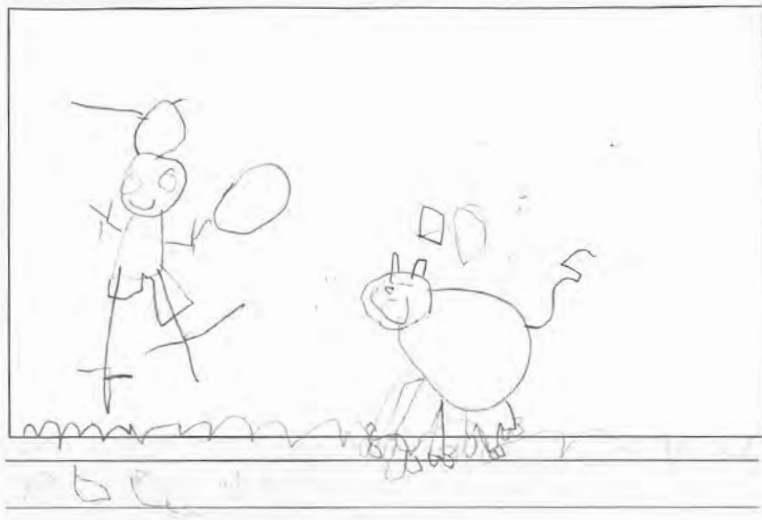
"Help a friend when they fall."

**2:** In this dictated response, the student did not provide a topic or context for the evidence (*Help a friend when they fall*).

**2:** The picture supports the dictated response about helping a friend when they fall.

**0:** There is no command of conventions evident in this dictated response.

GRADE K	P-11	Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points)	Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points)	Conventions (0-2 Points)
		1	1	0











*"Playing nicely."*

**1:** The dictated response generally addresses the writing prompt on how to grow a friendship, though it does not provide a topic or context for the evidence.

**1:** This dictated response includes an illustration that is consistent with the oral translation of the student's response.

**0:** This response was dictated.

Teachers can use or modify the optional *Kindergarten Writer's Checklist*, below, to meet the appropriate writing objectives to assist classroom instruction.

<b>Kindergarten Writer's Checklist</b>		
<p>I sounded out my words.</p>		
<p>I used finger spaces.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I like to run.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p>		
<p>I drew a picture to match my story.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center; gap: 20px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p style="color: blue;">I like to run fast.</p> </div>  </div>		
<p>I started my sentences with capital letters.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>		
<p>I used ending marks.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">  </div> </div>		
<p>I wrote neatly.</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="font-size: 2em;">Ss</p> </div>		
<p>I tried my best!</p>	