



**Priorities in Writing  
From Higher-Order to Sentence Level**

thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you identify a main point in the essay?</li> <li>• Does the writer present it clearly in the introduction or in a later paragraph?</li> </ul>
audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the writer show an awareness of audience?</li> <li>• Does she transform private language into public communication?</li> <li>• Does she maintain a tone and style appropriate to that audience?</li> </ul>
distance/ thoughtfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the writer have a critical distance from what she is describing?</li> <li>• Does the writer show depth in thinking?</li> </ul>
focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the writer stay on task, i.e. follow through with the thesis to the end?</li> <li>• Are all parts relevant?</li> </ul>
organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the essay have paragraphs of sufficient length to explain an idea but not so long that ideas are a jumble?</li> <li>• Are paragraphs or sentences ordered logically?</li> <li>• Can the reader easily follow the writer's thinking?</li> </ul>
development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the writer fully explained ideas?</li> <li>• Does she use enough details or examples that make her main point convincing?</li> </ul>
clarity	Can you easily understand what the writer means and where she is going?
purpose	Does the writer address the writing prompt adequately?

Higher-order areas reflect students' thinking and ability to communicate. Sentence-level skills support clear communication. Sentence-level problems may or may not affect meaning.

**Sentence-Level Concerns**

- imprecise language
- lack of sentence variety
- wordiness
- choppiness (e.g., short sentences, few transitions, lack of subordination)
- awkward phrases or style
- grammar (e.g., run-ons, possessives, verb tenses, etc.)
- punctuation (e.g., use of the semi-colon)
- mechanics (e.g., capitalization, use of italics, etc.)