Common Core State Standards—English Language Arts—Literacy—Writing—Grades 11-12—Standard 2—Writing Informative/Explanatory Texts

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/2/)
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

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| **Element of the Standard** | **Breakdown and how to check for implementation** |
| [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.a](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/2/a/)Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. |

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| Introduce a topic; | 1. Is your thesis clearly written?
2. Is the thesis analytical or evaluative in nature?
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| organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; | 1. Make a short list of your ideas, using words and/or phrases from your paper
2. Read your list. Do the ideas make sense and build logically?
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| include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. | 1. Headings are good if the paper is long enough. However, don’t depend on section headings instead of transition.
2. Have you included any graphics? If not, can you? Graphics like pictures, charts, tables, etc. can enhance your information and engage your reader. Don’t forget to use captions as appropriate with graphics as well as citations.
3. Since you are handing this paper in electronically, don’t forget to include multimedia like hotlinks, embedded video, audio recordings, and other possible enhancements.
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| [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.b](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/2/b/)Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. |

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| Develop the topic thoroughly | 1. Have you developed your topic to its fullest extent? Remember, this is a junior-senior level paper and should reflect that depth of thought. A cursory discussion of the topic is not enough. If you have used only one resource, for example, you’ve probably not given your topic enough depth.
2. Remember, you should have 3-4 pieces of evidence to support EACH idea statement you include---evaluation or analysis. The evidence can be paraphrased or quoted but should definitely be cited either with textual reference or parenthetic citation.
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| selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples | 1. Check your evidence for relevance. Is this fact important to your thesis and its development, or is it just an interesting side note? Some interesting “stuff” may fit into the introduction as context but should not appear in the body of the paper.
2. Extended definitions can be part of your evidence!
3. List the TYPES of evidence you used (see the list at the left). You should use a variety of types of evidence (at least 3).
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| appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. | 1. Have you identified your audience? BE SPECIFIC! (“Anyone who wants to learn about whales” isn’t specific.)
2. Have you considered your audience’s probably knowledge level of your topic? Don’t make it too simple, but start the information at a place that lays a clear foundation for your presentation of ideas/arguments.
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| [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.c](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/2/c/)Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts. |

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| Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax | 1. What types of transitions did you use? Highlight transitions in your paper in turquoise (not a pyramid color) to see where/what type of transitions you used.
2. Syntax is word order---did you use complex sentences in which the joining words (subordinating conjunctions, prepositions, etc.) show relationships and don’t just stick sentence elements together? “And” doesn’t show much relationship.
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| link the major sections of the text, | 1. In a longer paper (10+ pages) the sections may be linked by headers. Otherwise you should have some type of embedded transitions
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| create cohesion, | 1. Cohesion means everything in the paper fits together. If you can leave a word, sentence or phrase out and the paper still gives the same information and still makes sense, the word, sentence or phrase probably need to be dumped. It interferes with the cohesion. Each part of the paper (each WORD) should stick to the next!
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| and clarify the relationships | 1. Again, think about [subordinating conjunctions](http://www.smart-words.org/linking-words/conjunctions.html).
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| among complex ideas and concepts. | 1. Don’t use just simple sentences. This is junior-senior level writing! Complex sentences show the relationship between/among ideas.
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| [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.d](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/2/d/)Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic. |

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| Use precise language | 1. Love your thesaurus! Yes, the real one, not the computer (which is handy when you’re writing, but not enough in a real edit.) There’s a difference between “red” and “flaming magenta.”
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| domain-specific vocabulary | 1. If your paper is about geology, you should use geological terms (which you may need to define initially for your reader). Don’t “dumb down” vocabulary, but show that you’ve done your research by using appropriate language for the topic.
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| techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy | 1. Not everything is easy to explain in concrete terms. Also, sometimes the concrete explanation is too simple or just inelegant. Think about how to convey the meaning to your reader in the best way, even if that involves metaphoric language. Writing about rock formation and your feelings can use the same types of language structure. “Sedimentary rock transforms to igneous rock under heat and pressure within a volcano like a teenager transforms into a scientist in an advanced science class at school.”
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| [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.e](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/2/e/)Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. |

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| Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone | 1. A formal style in a junior-senior level paper uses grade-level vocabulary and complex sentence structure. The language is objective, impersonal, and precise. This should NOT sound like you talking.
2. Be sure to remove the word “you” in all its forms from a formal essay—it doesn’t belong.
3. In general, remove contractions.
4. Don’t use parenthesis except for citations.
5. Don’t use hyphens except in hyphenated words.
6. Be sure your language is PRECISE.
7. An objective tone is when the writing sounds unemotional and without bias. No exclamation marks!
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| attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. | 1. If you’re writing about science, use science terms, but also use the structures indicated by your topic. So, an experiment is designed in a particular way and if you’re writing about it, your paper should reflect that format. Other disciplines have conventions as well. Be sure you’ve researched your topic thoroughly so you’re aware of these conventions and norms and apply them.
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| [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.f](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/2/f/)Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic). |

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| Provide a concluding statement or section | 1. Do you have a concluding statement that ties to your thesis and sums up your main idea?
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| that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented | 1. In other words, does your concluding statement/section LOGICALLY and CLEARLY follow the thread of information/argument in your paper?
2. Does the information/explanation in the paper SUPPORT the conclusion? Does the conclusion logically follow the information presented?
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| articulating implications or the significance of the topic | 1. Why should the reader care? Whether it’s an argument (evaluation/opinion) or information, ultimately you have to be sure you’ve shown the reader why it is important for her/him to want to know more about this topic. If not, after the person has read your paper, he/she will simply forget it.
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