Smarter Balanced Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric  
Grades 3-5

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| 4     | The response is fully sustained and consistently and purposefully focused:  
• Controlling idea or main idea of a topic is clearly stated, focused, and strongly maintained.  
• Controlling idea or main idea of a topic is introduced and communicated clearly within the context. | The response has a clear and effective organizational structure creating unity and completeness:  
• Use of a variety of transitional strategies.  
• Logical progression of ideas from beginning to end.  
• Effective introduction and closure for audience and purpose. | The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details:  
• Use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated, comprehensive, and relevant.  
• Effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques. | The response clearly and effectively expresses ideas, using precise language:  
• Use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose. | The response demonstrates a strong command of conventions:  
• Few, if any, errors, in usage and sentence formation  
• Effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. |
| 3     | The response is adequately sustained and consistently and generally focused:  
• Focus is clear and for the most maintained, though some loosely related material may be present.  
• Some context provided for the controlling idea or main idea of the topic is adequate. | The response has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas loosely connected:  
• Adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety.  
• Adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end.  
• Adequate introduction and conclusion. | The response provides adequate support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the use of sources, facts, and details:  
• Some evidence from sources is integrated, though citations may be general or imprecise  
• Adequate use of some elaborative techniques. | The response adequately expresses ideas, employing a mix of precise with more general language  
• Use of domain-specific vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose. | The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions  
• Some errors in usage and sentence formation are present, but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed.  
• Adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. |
| 2     | The response is somewhat sustained and may have a minor drift in focus:  
• May be clearly focused on the controlling or main idea, but is insufficiently sustained.  
• Controlling idea or main idea may be unclear and somewhat unfocused. | The response has an inconsistent organizational structure, and flaws are evident:  
• Inconsistent use of basic transitional strategies with little variety.  
• Uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end.  
• Conclusion and introduction, if present, are weak. | The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes partial or uneven use of sources, facts, and details:  
• Evidence from sources is weakly integrated, and citations, if present are uneven.  
• Weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques. | The response expresses ideas unevenly, using simplistic language:  
• Use of domain-specific vocabulary that may at times be inappropriate for the audience and purpose. | The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions:  
• Frequent errors in usage may obscure meaning.  
• Inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. |
| 1     | The response may be related to the topic but may provide little or no discernible organizational structure:  
• May be very brief  
• May have a major drift  
• Focus may be confusing or ambiguous. | The response has little or no discernible organizational structure:  
• Few or no transitional strategies are evident  
• Frequent extraneous ideas may intrude. | The response provides minimal support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes little or no use of sources, facts, and details.  
• Use of evidence from sources is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant. | The response expression of ideas, is vague, lacks clarity or is confusing:  
• Uses limited language or domain-specific vocabulary  
• May have little sense of audience and purpose. | The respond demonstrates a lack of command of conventions:  
• Errors are frequent and severe and meaning is often obscure. |
| 0     | A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to write an informative-explanatory text. |

www.smarterbalanced.org

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