



## A List of Primary Traits

The members of the writing lab staff has come to a consensus, about good writing that establishes usable criteria to evaluate the writing we will read in the lab.

A consensus as to what makes good writing should begin with this qualifier, however: *writing is contextual*. By that we mean that writing depends on the disciplinary context and the situation in which the writing is done. Each discipline does have a distinct set of assumptions about the way knowledge is made and expressed. A student who writes an essay for an English literature course may be ruled by conventions and assumptions quite unlike those that guide the student writing for a history course.

Nevertheless, we have come to a consensus on those qualities in writing that cut across areas of expertise and knowledge. These are considered “primary traits,” usable criteria to evaluate the many kinds of writing that may come our way.

### Perspective

Good writing has perspective, a way of seeing. Perspective is expressed through *point of view, voice, and thesis*.

- *Point of View* reveals the experience, the knowledge and the inclination of the writer.
- *Voice* expresses the writer’s personality on the page.
- *Thesis* establishes the writer’s main idea.
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### Audience

Good writing is appropriate to the reader, the purpose, and the occasion.

### Evidence

Good writing makes use of detail to persuade, to move, or to inform the reader.

### Logic

Good writing is coherent from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, beginning to end.

### Correctness

Good writing displays competency in grammar and punctuation, and accuracy in spelling. The use of another’s words or ideas must always be cited.