In the **Language and Style** category, you have achieved a rating of **Developing**.

You can improve your writing score in this category by revising your essay based on specific criteria.

In order to move up to the **Proficient** rating, your writing must

* demonstrate a perspective and voice, as well as a general command of conventions;
* incorporate language that shows an awareness of the reader’s interests and mostly maintains a formal style; and
* employ interesting word choice and varied sentence structure.

You should remember to consider your audience and purpose when revising for language and style.

**Consider Your Audience**

In academic writing, you should maintain a formal style throughout the essay so your audience feels that you are presenting a serious point of view worth considering. Ask yourself the following questions:

* **Are there contractions I should break apart?** For example, consider *does not, will not*, or *had not* instead of *doesn’t*, *won’t*, or *hadn’t*.
* **Are there abbreviations I should spell out?**
* **Is there slang I can replace with more standard words and phrases?**

**Evaluate Word Choice**

Review the choices you made when selecting words. When you revise your essay, make sure your word choice is appropriate for the audience and purpose. Ask yourself the following questions:

* **Are there vague or basic words I could replace to make my meaning clearer?**
* **Will the technical language I use be understood by my readers, or should I provide more explanation?** Explaining technical terms can show your audience that you understand the subject matter.
* **Can I make my language more vivid with action verbs?** For example, instead of saying “The number of viewers decreased,” you might revise to say, “The number of viewers plummeted.”
* **Can I make my language more concise?** For example, where you might use a phrase like “get up,” you can replace the phrase with a single word, like “rise.”

**Vary Sentence Structure**

By varying your sentence structure, you can make your essay easier and more interesting to read. Ask yourself the following questions:

* **Do I use the same sentence beginning in multiple sentences in a row?** Try to vary the way you begin sentences to avoid repetition.   
    
  For example, “Students want freedom. Students need to have opportunities to fail.” Revising the subject of the second sentence can improve the flow: “Students want freedom. They need to have opportunities to fail.”
* **Do I use the same type of sentence repeatedly?** Try combining simple sentences that can slow your writing down. Where you have multiple simple sentences in a row, could you combine predicates?   
    
  For example, “Students want freedom. They need to have opportunities to fail. Students should be able to try new things.” Revise to streamline the thoughts in a single sentence: “Students want freedom and need to have opportunities to fail or to try new things.”

**Proofreading Checklist for Conventions, Usage, and Punctuation**

Use the following checklist to review and finalize the draft.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ▢ | Avoid using “I think,” “I believe,” or “I feel” in the claim statement. |
| ▢ | Ensure sentences are complete and are capitalized appropriately. |
| ▢ | Check for run-ons, fragments, and comma splices. |
| ▢ | Check subject and verb agreement. |
| ▢ | Check for correct verb tense. |
| ▢ | Check spelling and punctuation. |
| ▢ | Remove slang words and phrases, except when using it deliberately for emphasis or effect. |
| ▢ | Ensure that formal, objective, and appealing style is maintained throughout the essay. |

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