

EVALUATION GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO WRITING COMPETITION



PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

The primary purpose of Individual Scenario Writing evaluation is to provide coaches and students with feedback that allows them to develop and improve creative writing skills. Scenario Writing is performance-based, and evaluation is an authentic assessment of the scenario. Because all scenarios are unique, FPSPI employs a variety of strategies to review student work, using specific criteria to evaluate performance. Skill improvement is the most important aspect of evaluation; however, since Scenario Writing also involves competition and competition scoring must be impartial, a secondary purpose of the evaluation is to provide a fair, consistent, and reliable method for comparing Scenarios.

ATTITUDE

It is essential that evaluators maintain a positive attitude throughout the evaluation process. The central purpose of the Future Problem Solving Program International is to assist students in acquiring better thinking, communicating, and problem solving skills. Evaluation should always occur with these goals in mind. **Evaluators offer constructive feedback and make students want to improve their writing and problem solving skills.** Regardless of the quality of the student effort, effective feedback praises students for what they did well and encourages them to use their improved skills to tackle the next problem. **Negative feedback may discourage a writer and keep them from improving, defeating the purpose of the program.**

It is important for evaluators not to extend their personal expectations and skill level to that of the scenarios represented in an evaluation sample. Evaluators should not confuse the sophistication of the task with that of the students, but consider the age/division of the student and the level of competition (practice or competitive) in constructing positive feedback. Once an exceptional scenario is noted, it may be easy to expect the same quality from all scenarios. Evaluators should remember the completion of a Scenario is, by itself, a major accomplishment, which often involves a great deal of time and energy. It is quite possibly the most demanding aspect of their educational experience. Students' work will delight, frustrate, and eventually reward the demanding task of evaluation.

The ability to consistently provide positive and constructive feedback is the goal to which all evaluators must aspire.

FEEDBACK

Feedback helps students understand the strengths and weaknesses of their scenarios and motivates them to improve their skills. Feedback is ***the most important aspect of the evaluation***. Feedback enables students to focus their learning process and allows the coach to adapt instruction to meet the needs of the writer.



Comments, both general in nature and specific to a single response, are provided on the score sheet.

Using a strategy devised by Edward de Bono (1974) improves the quality of feedback. Edward de Bono suggests that attention be given to the following four areas when responding to students: praise, clarification, criticism, and amplification.

Praise: Evaluator acknowledgments of effort, creativity, and major strengths

- Reinforces positive aspects of writing
- Rewards the writer for facing a problem and developing a solution idea
- Reminds the writer, even if the score is not high, he/she did some things right and encourages him/her to improve
- Establishes a good working relationship between the evaluator and writer

Clarification: Evaluator comments asking writers to clarify ideas

- Points out statements/passages that may be confusing or unclear and offers suggestions for improvement
- Encourages writers to improve the clarity and elaboration of their work
- Promotes the development of effective communication skills

Criticism (Ideas for Improvement): Evaluator suggestions for areas needing improvement

- Helps writers build their skills with specific, constructive comments
- Gives writers examples of ways to use their ideas, research, or the problem solving process more effectively
- Encourages writers to learn from their work to become better problem solvers

Amplification: Evaluator comments that help writers expand their ideas, push their thinking even further, and improve the quality of their problem solving

- Points out gaps in information or logic
- Helps improve their planning for a scenario
- Identifies other ideas that might be considered
- Prompts students to consider the possible consequences of their ideas
- Lists positive, constructive ideas for improvement

See *Strategies for Effective Feedback* to review these concepts, and view examples and ideas for feedback.



PREPARATION

Knowledge is Necessary! Before evaluating scenarios, evaluators should have knowledge of the topics. The students put tremendous effort into their work and deserve to have their scenarios reviewed by conscientious evaluators. Writers can really lose respect for evaluators, and the problem solving process - no matter how valid the feedback is - if a basic understanding of the material is not obvious. Reading the "Overview" section for each of the topic chapters in *Readings, Research, and Resources*, along with several article summaries is a necessary minimum to gain topic awareness for evaluation. These can be obtained from your Affiliate Director.

SCORE SHEET COMPONENTS

Identification – An evaluator completes and/or verifies the identification portion of the score sheet before evaluating.

Scoring – An evaluator uses the descriptors on the score sheet for each criterion to determine the numerical score.

Feedback – An evaluator uses the space provided on the score sheet for feedback.

Refer to a copy of the score sheet as you review these guidelines.

SUGGESTED APPROACH TO SCORING

To get an idea of the quality of the assigned scenarios, it is recommended that you read through all of the scenarios in your packet before you begin actual scoring. While reading the scenarios form a preliminary opinion in your mind as to the rank order of the scenarios and select terms that begin to describe the range of quality. After an overview of the entire packet, you can then begin to focus on the scoring criteria. After actual scoring, your opinion and rank order may change; the preliminary reading, however, will help set the range of quality in which you will be working and may ultimately save you time redoing scores or breaking ties. During the preliminary reading, you might also make notes regarding appropriate comments/feedback.

REVIEW

- Read all scenarios in packet before assigning actual scores.
- Form a preliminary opinion of the rank order of scenarios.
- Form a preliminary opinion of the range of quality.
- Reread each scenario and score according to rubric.
- Provide feedback. (See *Strategies for Effective Feedback* included in this document.)
- Rank order scenarios according to actual scores.
- Assign a quality term to each scenario. (For internal use only.)

This is a suggested approach to scoring; however, experienced evaluators may have formed other successful methods. We encourage you to use the method that works best for you as long as each scenario is given the same careful consideration using the areas included on the rubric

USE OF THE RUBRIC

It is very important that you use the rubric with each scenario you evaluate. To correctly use the rubric, begin with the middle scores and determine if the scenario meets the explanation of that score. If it does, move up to the next highest score on the rubric, read that description, and determine if the scenario meets that explanation. (If it does not, go back down and assign the appropriate score.) If the scenario meets the higher descriptor, move to the next higher score and read that explanation. If that descriptor does not fit, assign the lower score. If the highest descriptor fits, you must assign that score. If the middle descriptor does not fit, the process is the same as you move in the opposite direction and keep moving down until the explanation fits your opinion of the scenario for that criterion. It is also important that you not let any other criterion influence your score for the criterion on which you are working. For example, if you find many mechanical errors and score a 1-2 for Mechanics, you must not let that low score influence the scoring of any other criterion score.



REVIEW

- Use the rubric descriptors with each scenario.
- Begin with the middle score (3; 5-6; or 7-9).
 - If that criterion is met, move up to the next higher score for consideration.
- Repeat and assign highest score that fits the scenario.
- If criterion is not met, move down to the next lowest score.
- Repeat and assign the score that best fits the scenario.
- Rate each criterion independent of the others.
- Where 3 choices exist within a criterion level, use the higher number to indicate that the scenario approaches the next criterion level and use the lowest number to indicate the scenario is in the beginning stages of that level.
- *Scores of "1" for Creative Thinking and Futuristic Thinking will not be accepted for evaluation at the international level.*

RUBRIC DESCRIPTORS

Although each criterion of the rubric is explained on the score sheet, please review these detailed descriptors before evaluating.

Creative Thinking

Look for fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration when scoring creative thinking. Look for writings that use creative approaches in a variety of ways throughout the scenario to advance this score. There are many possible avenues by which writers can develop innovative approaches. Highest scores will be awarded for work that incorporates inventive approaches throughout the scenario, including but not limited to:

- Inventive thinking
- Unusual approaches to plot development, novel characteristics of objects or characters, "out of the box" thinking, etc.(Style/Voice, Topic Research)
- Unusual setting or characters (Character Development)
- Surprise or novel ending (Idea Development)
- Elaborated sensory details as well as details of reflections, emotions, or thoughts. (Character Development)

The main difference between *Exemplary* and *Strong* levels for Creative Thinking is that the *Strong* level does not always sustain creative thinking, whereas the *Exemplary* level will see evidence throughout the writing. At the *Proficient* level, some evidence of creative thinking will be present, but not sustained, or connections may be weak.

Futuristic Thinking

Look for consistent futuristic thinking throughout the scenario – not just in one or two places where futuristic “gadgets” are described. Also ask these questions:

- Does the writer base ideas on current trends/research and make logical projections into the future? Distinguish between futuristic trends/research as opposed to topic-related research.
- Are the ideas believable? (Idea Development)
- Are the futuristic ideas relevant to the story and/or the topic? (Topic Related Research)
- Has the writer projected specialized language – terminology unique to the topic or specialist in the field - into the future? (Style/Voice)

An innovative idea that is also futuristic is a blending of research, analogy, and creativity that predicts a possible future. By combining futuristic thinking, creativity, and research, a writer may justify and make his/her unique idea believable. This sophistication of thought will be awarded points in multiple criteria: Futuristic Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Topic Related Research.

Idea Development

Look for logical and intriguing ways in which the writer develops their scenario and draws in the reader. Details should serve the purpose of advancing the story, and move beyond a simply conventional story progression. Carefully consider the age/division of writers, as those in the Junior division specifically have more likely only been exposed to what an advanced reader would consider formulaic. Keep these things in mind when evaluating Idea Development:



- Strong, positive social/cultural aspects
 - Logical connection to the topic
 - Believable explanations
 - Consequences/impact of the ideas on the situation posed
 - Sophistication in organizational strategies
 - Natural transitions
 - Appropriate rising action/conflict, leading to the resolution/denouement.
- Note:** resolution does not necessarily mean a solution
- Reflections/Insights into the consequence of characters' actions or challenges related to the topic or plot, inviting the reader to make connections and consider the points being made

Note the differences between the *Strong* and *Exemplary* levels. “In-depth” at the *Strong* level signifies understanding in great detail and the ability to share the key details the reader needs to understand. “Complex” at the *Exemplary* level goes one step further. Instead of just showing a comprehensive awareness that focuses the reader, the writer is able to connect this information into complex ideas revealed by choosing key pertinent details that engage the reader and allows him/her to take the story to a new level of understanding

Style/Voice

The tone of the scenario should entertain, inform, or persuade without being overly “haughty” or “chummy.” A writer’s anger should not seep through the scenario except as a reflection of a character’s thoughts and emotions. Scenarios should avoid overused adverbs and adjectives, should use colorful verbs, and include words that convey feeling. The writer should use an appropriate tone and voice acceptable to a wide range of readers. In addition, a mixture of some of the following elements of style should be evidenced throughout the scenario:

- Writing techniques including simile/metaphor, idioms, sensory detail, symbolism, understatement, exaggeration, personification, foreshadowing, allusion
- Well crafted, varied sentences
- Conscientious word choice, accounting for the writer's age/division
- Personal touch motivating the reader to consider consequences
- Skillful use of vocabulary
- Effective inclusion of dialogue – between multiple characters or internal

Character Development

Look for a central/main character(s) - animate or inanimate - developed throughout the scenario. Some more mature writers may include a second main character or a subordinate character that is also well developed. Save the scores of “1” for scenarios that narrate without developing characters through action. When evaluating a well-developed character(s), consider the following:

- Many facets of the characters’ personalities are evident.
- Characters show emotional responses to situations and dialogue.
- Characters analyze, reflect, or show insight to ideas, issues, or concepts.
- The main character changes (however slight) as a result of the “rising action” of the story.
- Characters evoke an emotional response in the reader.

Mechanics

An evaluator must consider punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar for this criterion.

Advanced writers may:

- Express conventions creatively for a purpose or to enhance meaning or
- “play” with dialogue, dialect, or slang without detracting from story line.

Topic Related Research

Good writers will artfully blend research about the topic or topic related futuristic trends into the story line. Look for relevant terminology as well as a logical knowledge about the topic projected into the future. Evaluators should have researched all topic options in advance of evaluation. If there are questions as to whether an aspect of a scenario is current, futuristic, or student created, the evaluator should consult provided research or additional sources.

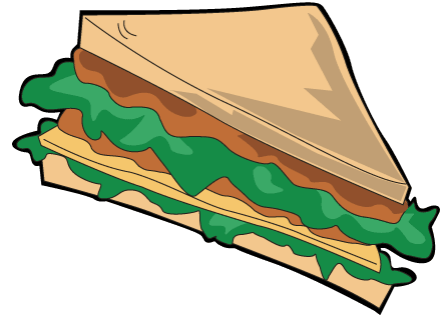


STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Despite the quality of its content, feedback is useless unless it has a positive psychological impact on students and coaches. The following are strategies evaluators can use to make their point while keeping students proud of their effort and excited about future work.

Feedback Sandwich

By starting and ending with positive comments, a slice of criticism is more easily swallowed when it is sandwiched between two thick slices of praise. The key to the technique is to provide *legitimate* praise. A comment such as, “Fun story to read!” does not relate to the specific effort. A comment such as, “How could your scenario provide more insight into the future?” relates to the rubric and gives students a jumping off point for improving their skills in upcoming scenarios. Remember, a positive start and finish motivates students for the next writing.



Thoughtful Word Choice

Just as a student's word choice impacts how effectively their efforts are communicated, your word choice impacts how well students will receive and respond to your feedback.

- Substitute “when” or “and” for the word “but.” Explain to a writer, “You have some terrific ideas *when* you relate them to the topic and your purpose.” This comment is far more positive than “You have some terrific ideas, *but* you don’t relate them to the topic.”
- Use a question to encourage a writer to rethink an idea. Asking “What in your scenario (or research) suggests this will happen?” puts the responsibility of explanation back on the writer and encourages thought on the writer’s part. Writing a comment telling students that their reasoning is faulty doesn’t help them improve and can be hurtful.

Limited Criticism

People can only respond to a certain amount of criticism, even if it is in the form of a feedback sandwich. Consequently, writers who may need improvement in several areas may only be capable of digesting a few suggestions for improvement; therefore, evaluators should determine the areas that need the most improvement and focus feedback on those areas. If a student improves in one major area (for example, improving the clarity of their ideas), many of the smaller problems in the scenario may be eliminated as well.

Score Sheet Descriptors

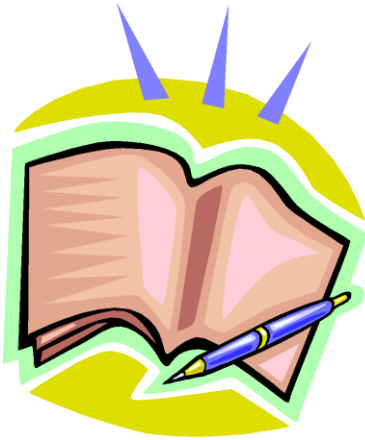
Identify the descriptors from each criterion that contributed to your score. This helps the writer to follow your train of thought in determining their score. Following the rubric improves consistency among evaluators and ensures the message students receive about their work, and how to improve it, clearly corresponds to their efforts.

Proper Perspective

FPS writings easily convince evaluators that students are sophisticated and advanced thinkers; therefore, evaluators may have elevated expectations and be highly critical of weaker scenarios. Remember that even the weakest scenario required a great amount of thought, creativity, and effort to complete, and was done by a student. Evaluator feedback must take into account the age/division of writers. A positive attitude from the evaluator encourages growth and development from students performing at all skill levels.

None of the suggested techniques for providing effective feedback should be misinterpreted as saying that you should set low expectations. In fact, the opposite is true. Scenario writers will continually amaze you with their breadth of knowledge, creativity, and insight. Furthermore, high expectations often produce better results. Evaluators should set their expectations high and remember that students with limited life experience and great potential for growth can write sophisticated FPS scenarios. Set your expectations realistically high, offer feedback in a positive manner, and encourage writers to reach their full potential.

REMINDERS



Consider the age of the writer.

FPS students may sound like they are in graduate school, but don't forget their youth. Although a similar amount of effort, thought, and time may have gone into both a junior and a senior scenario, a world of difference exists between the two finished products. Junior and some middle writers may not have yet developed their own personal style and may have had limited knowledge of how real people behave in complex situations. Junior writers also have a much more limited understanding of how economic, government, and educational institutions really operate. Even for senior writers, research alone may not replace the real world knowledge that they simply have not yet experienced. Understanding the students is key in providing effective feedback.

Leave out personal biases and beliefs.

Scenario writers come from a variety of religious, cultural, and political backgrounds. It is not the evaluator's job to change a writer's perspective on life, convince the writer of a different viewpoint, or impose beliefs on the writer. Your comments and scoring should reflect the clarity and effectiveness of the writing, regardless of your ideas on the subject. As scenario writers, they are encouraged to make their audience think about their purpose, not necessarily to persuade the audience to agree with their views.

Use the rubric.

Once again, please work the rubric as instructed in order to ensure consistency among the evaluators in scoring. Since multiple evaluations determine the top scenarios, the important factor is consistency in the scoring of all scenarios within a packet in regards to overall quality. Students and coaches can then better ascertain ways to improve in future writings.



RANKING

Each evaluator receives a packet of randomly distributed scenarios. The top-scoring scenario in each evaluator's packet is awarded a rank of "1." The second highest scenario receives a "2," and so on.