

# Scoring Key: Grade 8

## Argumentative Performance Task

### Focus Standards

Grade 8: W.8.5; L.8.1; L.8.2

## 4-Point Argumentative Performance Task Writing Rubric (Grades 6–11)

SCORE	4 POINTS	3 POINTS	2 POINTS	1 POINT	NS
<b>ORGANIZATION AND PURPOSE</b>	<p>The response has a clear and effective organizational structure, creating a sense of unity and completeness. The organization is fully sustained between and within paragraphs. The response is consistently and purposefully focused:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>claim is introduced, clearly communicated, and the focus is strongly maintained for the purpose and audience</li> <li>consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies to clarify the relationships between and among ideas</li> <li>effective introduction and conclusion</li> <li>logical progression of ideas from beginning to end; strong connections between and among ideas with some syntactic variety</li> <li>alternate and opposing argument(s) are clearly acknowledged or addressed*</li> </ul>	<p>The response has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness. Though there may be minor flaws, they do not interfere with the overall coherence. The organization is adequately sustained between and within paragraphs. The response is generally focused:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>claim is clear, and the focus is mostly maintained for the purpose and audience</li> <li>adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety to clarify relationships between and among ideas</li> <li>adequate introduction and conclusion</li> <li>adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end; adequate connections between and among ideas</li> <li>alternate and opposing argument(s) are adequately acknowledged or addressed*</li> </ul>	<p>The response has an inconsistent organizational structure. Some flaws are evident, and some ideas may be loosely connected. The organization is somewhat sustained between and within paragraphs. The response may have a minor drift in focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>claim may be somewhat unclear, or the focus may be insufficiently sustained for the purpose and/or audience</li> <li>inconsistent use of transitional strategies and/or little variety</li> <li>introduction or conclusion, if present, may be weak</li> <li>uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end; and/or formulaic; inconsistent or unclear connections among ideas</li> <li>alternate and opposing argument(s) may be confusing or not acknowledged *</li> </ul>	<p>The response has little or no discernible organizational structure. The response may be related to the claim but may provide little or no focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>claim may be confusing or ambiguous; response may be too brief or the focus may drift from the purpose and/or audience</li> <li>few or no transitional strategies are evident</li> <li>introduction and/or conclusion may be missing</li> <li>frequent extraneous ideas may be evident; ideas may be randomly ordered or have unclear progression</li> <li>alternate and opposing argument(s) may not be acknowledged *</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient (includes copied text)</li> <li>In a language other than English</li> <li>Off-topic</li> <li>Off-purpose</li> </ul>

\*Acknowledging and/or addressing the opposing point of view begins at grade 7.

SAMPLE NUMBER	SCORE	SCORE JUSTIFICATION
<b>Sample Grade 8 O/P A</b>	<b>3</b>	<p>The writer begins with an adequate introduction to the essay: "A recent study showed that the U.S. penny costs more than 1.41 cents it is worth. This is not a new problem." Then, the student clearly states the claim, writing, "The question for the U.S. is should they keep the penny, or stop minting it? The U.S. penny costs more money to produce than it is worth, and therefore, it is creating inflation in the U.S. economy." The writer maintains the focus of the cost of the penny and the inflation problems related to it throughout the passage. The student makes effective use of a variety of both simple and more sophisticated transitional words and phrases within and between paragraphs to introduce and expand upon the ideas being presented ("And," "Clearly," "However," "But," "unfortunately"). While the student writes in support of eliminating the penny, opposing arguments are also presented, including how "pennies, can add up quickly..." and "people think that if they make the penny cheaper to produce, then they can keep it." These opposing claims, however, are introduced somewhat awkwardly within the organization of the paper, making the progression of ideas adequate rather than logical ("Clearly pennies cost more to produce than they are worth. However, Washington Middle School would disagree."). The student presents an adequate conclusion that effectively summarizes the claim.</p> <p>The response has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness, and the minor flaw in the progression of ideas does not detract significantly from the overall coherence of the piece.</p>

SAMPLE NUMBER	SCORE	SCORE JUSTIFICATION
<b>Sample Grade 8 O/P B</b>	<b>2</b>	<p>The writer's claim is ambiguous: "There are two different sides to this story . . . what do you think?" The introduction is weak and slightly confusing ("Do we really need pennies? If we get rid of them, it certainly wouldn't anger Jim Flaherty who says 'Pennies take up too much space on our dressers at home.'"). There was no variety in the use of transitional phrases, with the writer using the term "But" throughout to express a change in the line of reasoning. The writer's progression of ideas is uneven and the connections between the ideas are unclear and do not adequately support either side of the attempted claim. While there is an attempt at a comprehensive conclusion, it lacks details and an overall summarization of a claim: "If America banned the penny it wouldn't be the end of the world. It would hurt many organizations, and many different things. But, it would also help them, by rounding, everything would be more simple."</p> <p>The inconsistent organizational structure with evidence flaws make this paper a 2 for organization and purpose.</p>

SAMPLE NUMBER	SCORE	SCORE JUSTIFICATION
Sample Grade 8 O/P C	4	<p>This student presents an exemplar response to the question and this score is a clear example of a 4. The clear claim is introduced in the first two sentences: "Why should we keep the penny when it costs more than it is worth? The obvious solution would be to simply remove the penny." The student provides a clearly focused organizational structure of why we should get rid of the penny throughout the response. There is consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies that clarify the relationship between the ideas ("The obvious solution," "The main reason," "Some people think," "The clear course of action is"), in addition to syntactic variety to logically connect ideas ("It is clearly foolish to," "The time spent counting pennies should be used much more productively," "it seems reasonable to assume"). Not only is the claim introduced well, but the writer also effectively concludes the argument stating, "Ceasing production of the penny would save millions of dollars and time, and could make people's lives better. Fears of economic collapse are unfounded. The clear course of action is to remove the penny." The student also effectively presents the alternate argument that should be addressed, "Some people think that removing the penny is not a good idea in fears of inflation and economic problems. This is not the case," and "If all of these countries can drop their lowest value coin without their economy collapsing, it seems reasonable to assume that we would be fine too."</p> <p>The cohesive structure, consistent focus, and effective demonstration of purposeful writing make this an example of a 4.</p>

SAMPLE NUMBER	SCORE	SCORE JUSTIFICATION
Sample Grade 8 O/P D	3	<p>The writer's claim is clear: "I don't believe that pennies are needed in our society today," and "I think that getting rid of the penny will be beneficial to the United States." The focus of this claim is adequately maintained throughout the essay ("Military bases have started rounding bills to the nearest 5-cents, and it seems to be working well," "some businesses will be sure to round down to balance it out," and "Unless the government can find a way to make pennies with a more cost efficient material, I think the cost is not worth it.") Adequate transitional strategies clarify the relationship between ideas ("Although this is true, the negative sides to this story outweigh the good" and "Although people think getting rid of the penny is unneeded"); however, there is little variety in the transitions used. The progression of ideas from beginning to end is adequate and easy to follow. The writer acknowledges opposing arguments within the essay: "Some people fear that the rounding may result in costing us extra money," and "Others think that the history of the penny is important to our American culture." The opposing arguments are acknowledged but dismissed more than addressed. The conclusion is also clearly stated ("Unless the government can find a way to make pennies with a more cost efficient material, I think the cost is not worth it. In conclusion, I don't believe that pennies are needed in our society today. . . . I think that getting rid of the penny would be beneficial to today's society.")</p> <p>The evident organizational structure and sense of completeness as well as the adequately sustained organization make this paper a 3.</p>

SAMPLE NUMBER	SCORE	SCORE JUSTIFICATION
Sample Grade 8 O/P E	1	<p>This response earned a 1 for Organization and Purpose. The student began by stating a clear claim ("I think they should stop making the penny."), but the response to support the claim is too brief. There is an unclear progression of ideas following the writer's claim with little to no attempt to expand upon the ideas presented. For example, the student writes, "The reason is it costs more to make than its worth. The reason I think it costs more to make than its worth is because of the facts they gave me in the sources." Although the transitional phrase "In conclusion" is used, there is no actual summation included. Alternate and/or opposing arguments are not acknowledged.</p> <p>The response is related to the prompt, but the brevity and lack of a discernable organizational structure earn this paper a score of 1.</p>

SAMPLE NUMBER	SCORE	SCORE JUSTIFICATION
<b>Sample Grade 8 O/P F</b>	<b>2</b>	<p>The student's claim in this essay is clear, "Should we keep the penny? My thought on this yes, we should keep the penny. There are many things that would be effected if we got rid of [the penny]"; however, the focus of the student's claim is insufficiently sustained throughout the essay. There is a lack of cohesion throughout the essay with few effective transitions to connect or introduce ideas. For example, the writer shifts from "if we got rid of the penny then the amount of money for things would be rounded up or down" into "The penny is a big part of our history too" and then "It is also in many popular idioms." While the student does use some transitional phrases ("But," "Also"), there is little variety and no particular sequence outlined through their use. The student attempts to include an alternate and opposing argument ("The penny does cost more to make than it's worth . . ."); however, the argument is not adequately addressed or countered. The writer does include a conclusion that attempts to summarize their claim: "In conclusion I feel we should keep the penny. Its a big part of our history and is used in common phrases. It maybe more expensive to make than it's worth but that can be fixed by being made out of different things."</p> <p>Overall, while some indicators venture into the 3 range, this is a clear example of a 2 because the response has an inconsistent organizational structure with evident flaws.</p>

SAMPLE NUMBER	SCORE	SCORE JUSTIFICATION
<b>Sample Grade 8 O/P G</b>	<b>2</b>	<p>The student opens this essay with the claim, "I think we should just we just stop producing pennies because it it was a waste of money," and jumps straight into examples from the text instead of providing an introduction into the topic: "for example in source #2 it says 'estimated \$700 million in wages that businesses pay retail clerks to count pennies' that's Cleary is a lot of money just for counting pennies!" The ideas are not expanded on or fully developed, making attempted connections between ideas inconsistent and unclear. There is only one transitional strategy evident ("Another reason"). While the writer concludes with, "that is why I think the penny should stop being made," this statement is embedded into another sentence and does not provide an adequate conclusion. The writer attempts to propose an alternate argument by stating, "I think somebody would disagree with me by saying the penny should keep being produced because at some cases you might need the penny in case something is 5.04 dollars but you only have 5.03 dollars that penny could be very useful." However, the opposing claim is confusing and inadequately addresses an alternate argument.</p> <p>The response's inconsistent organizational structure with evidence earns this a 2.</p>

SAMPLE NUMBER	SCORE	SCORE JUSTIFICATION
<b>Sample Grade 8 O/P H</b>	<b>3</b>	<p>The student's introduction and claim is clear ("The production of the penny in the United States should continue because it has been in our world for more than 200 years. If we eliminate it now, it will change something huge.") There is also an adequate conclusion ("Pennies are not only a piece of American culture; they are also useful for good causes. This is important because pennies are a good thing for America.") The student presents an alternate argument to the claim stating that some people, "might say that it takes up too much space and is not useful anymore." There are adequate transitions ("For example," "also," "however") to indicate progression of ideas; however, due to minimal elaboration, there are not enough ideas to maintain an adequate progression or sustain a strong focus.</p> <p>The paper does, however, have an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness.</p>