

## Guide to Using Signal Checks for Students

Once you have drafted your essay, the revisions begin! Signal checks, your peers, and your teacher will help you to improve your essay to make the most convincing argument possible.

When you run a signal check, you will almost always receive **four pieces of feedback**. This feedback aligns with the four rubric categories:



**Claim and Focus**



**Organization**



**Support and Evidence**



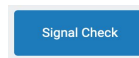
**Language and Style**

To help you make sense of your signal check feedback and implement the feedback you receive, we have put together this guide with instructions and ways to think about the advice you receive. Most of the time, signal checks are able to give you good advice to make your writing stronger. But sometimes, you will need to think critically about the feedback you are given.

The follow steps are best for using signal checks:

1 Complete a **full** draft of your essay. Use the [Checklist for Argumentative Writing](#) to make sure you have completed all of the writing steps before starting to revise.

2 Ask Project Topeka for a signal check.



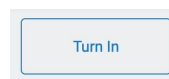
3 Read through all of the feedback the signal checks give you. There will be feedback throughout your essay as well as by clicking the signals at the top.



4 Think critically about the feedback, decide how it applies to your writing, and plan out the revisions you will make to your writing.

5 Make **all** of the revisions you need to based on the signal check before asking for a new one. You will receive new feedback with each signal check, but just because new feedback appears, it doesn't mean that the original problem was fixed—make sure you incorporate all of the changes before moving on.

6 When you have finished all of your revisions, including those from peer editing and your teacher, and your essay is complete, click "Turn In" to submit to your teacher.



Remember, **signal checks are completed by a computer program**. The computer will analyze your writing sentence by sentence and look for specific things like transition phrases, strong language, and claims aligning to the prompt. The signal checks do not give feedback on your essay overall. This means you will need to revise your essay to make sure it flows logically and the reader can understand the major points you are trying to make. Remember: you will also be reviewing your essay with your peers and your teacher to help you revise and they will be able to help you identify these issues too.

Sometimes, you might disagree with a signal check—that’s okay! You should always think critically about the feedback you receive. Think about:

- After rereading my essay and the feedback, do I think the computer accurately identified my claim and evidence? If not, how can I make my claim and evidence more clear?
- Is there a grammar error that is affecting how the computer understands my writing?
- Is the computer looking for a certain type of writing (e.g., strong arguments)? Is that the style I am trying to use?
- Is the computer identifying a portion of my writing as something it is not (e.g., a conclusion, a counterclaim, a topic sentence)? If so, does this feedback pertain to this specific portion of my writing? Does this comment help me in other places?
- Where else could this feedback improve my writing? Is the computer identifying something I did well in one place that I could improve in other areas?

Here are some examples of how you can think about signal check feedback:

<b>Text:</b>	<b>Signal Check Feedback:</b>	<b>Think about:</b>	<b>Action Items to Resolve Feedback:</b>
<i>"I believe schools should allow their students to use their phones in class."</i>	<i>Your ideas are starting to show here. Make sure to present an arguable claim, a statement with which others might disagree. Write a specific claim that shows your position on cell phone use in class.</i>	Does my language match what the signal check is looking for? Remember, in argumentative writing, signal checks are looking for strong, declarative language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review language to determine whether or not your tone is consistent throughout the piece of writing</li> <li>• Adjust wording when the tone does not match the formal tone needed to address your audience.</li> </ul>
<i>"Being on your phone during class will only encourage them to not use education in school."</i>	<i>You have a stronger command of language in this sentence. Look for places in your essay where you can be more varied or complex in your sentence structure.</i>	Even if the signal check says I did something well, does my sentence actually make sense when I read it out loud? What words or punctuation are missing or extra in this sentence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the sentence for yourself and decide if you agree with the signal check feedback.</li> <li>• Read your entire essay aloud. As you are reading, make note of sentences that do not sound right. Then, go back and adjust the wording.</li> </ul>

## Struggling to Improve Your Signal Checks?



Don't get discouraged! When working to improve your essay with signal checks, it might be harder to jump from 3 to 4 bars than it might be to jump your essay from 1 to 2 bars. If you are using the argumentative writing rubric to guide your revisions, you are probably improving the overall essay, even if the signals don't change. Revise until you feel confident about your essay; don't just keep revising because the computer hasn't given you full bars. Sometimes, revising too much without paying attention to the writing rubric or making sure the whole essay still flows logically can actually make your writing weaker.



### Not getting a signal check?

Follow these steps to revise your writing and ask for a new signal check:

1. Reread your writing and decide whether you think the writing is on-topic or not.
2. Proofread and check that you have broken your writing into sentences with periods.
3. Determine whether or not you have a clear claim statement that is its own sentence including your stance and evidence, and whether this claim statement uses language aligning to the prompt.

If you still do not receive a signal check after making these adjustments, then it is time to seek guidance from your teacher.