

A GUIDE TO EVALUATING YOUR OWN WRITING

Use this checklist to help you evaluate your work. The four areas - topic, ideas, organization and expression - are the ones professors concentrate on when assigning grades. Ignore any specifics in each area that are not applicable (headings, abstract, etc). You don't have to assign yourself a grade, but if you do, use C as your starting point (that is, assume you've written an adequate paper) and move up or down from there.

1. Topic

Does the paper stick to the topic?	A B C D F
Is there a clear definition of what the central topic or issue is?	A B C D F
Is the topic sufficiently narrow or broad such that you can cover it fully in the assigned length?	A B C D F
Is there a clear rationale for analyzing or discussing the topic?	A B C D F
Is there a clear thesis or perspective on the topic: not just 'what', but 'what about it'?	A B C D F
<i>Overall</i>	A B C D F

2. Ideas

Is there a good balance between ideas and evidence?	A B C D F
Have you understood and applied the literature and theories or have you merely read and repeated them?	A B C D F
Are you too general, too descriptive and/or too full of generalizations that can't be supported?	A B C D F
Are your ideas clichéd or repetitious?	A B C D F
Do you show awareness of problematic or controversial elements?	A B C D F
Do you show awareness of potential objections or alternate approaches?	A B C D F
Does the argument made in the body lead logically and inevitably to your conclusions?	A B C D F
<i>Overall</i>	A B C D F

3. Organization and Structure

Are there clearly defined sections in the paper that correspond to the requirements of the assignment?	A B C D F
Do you use headings correctly?	A B C D F
Does the introduction define the issue, state a rationale and indicate a focus for your discussion/analysis?	A B C D F
Does each paragraph in the body address a distinct idea?	A B C D F
Or, does each paragraph contribute to the development of the distinct idea of its section?	A B C D F
Does the conclusion merely restate the topic or thesis or does it offer a genuine conclusion?	A B C D F
The three principles of effective organization: Does the paper as a whole and each section, paragraph and sentence have unity (deal with one idea)? Does each have coherence (move smoothly and logically)? Does each have emphasis (important points strategically placed)?	A B C D F
Is the abstract accurate, concise, self-contained and readable?	A B C D F
<i>Overall</i>	A B C D F

4. Expression

Is the writing style concise, direct and interesting?	A B C D F
Is the tone appropriate: not emotional, grandstanding or overly "creative"?	A B C D F
Is there a good variety of sentence lengths and types?	A B C D F
Is the diction appropriate? good and varied vocabulary precision in word choice clear and simple rather than long and Latinate (eg, 'walk' vs. 'achieve an ambulatory state')	A B C D F
Are there errors in mechanics: grammar, punctuation, usage or spelling?	A B C D F
Are the citation, referencing and formatting complete and accurate?	A B C D F
<i>Overall</i>	A B C D F

Final Grade Average	A B C D F
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