

GRADING CRITERIA

- F paper: Its treatment of the subject is superficial; its theme lacks discernible organization; its prose is garbled or stylistically elementary. Mechanical errors are frequent. In short, the ideas, organization, and style fall far below what is acceptable college writing.
- D paper: Its treatment and development of the subject are usually only rudimentary; there is little evidence of a conscious perception of persona or audience. While organization is present, it is neither clear nor effective. Sentences are frequently awkward, ambiguous, and marred by serious mechanical errors. Evidence of careful proofreading is scanty, if nonexistent. The whole piece, may give the impression of having been conceived and written in haste, or it may appear to have been hurried into existence.
- C paper: It is generally competent--it meets the assignment; it has some mechanical errors; its content is logically organized and developed; it embodies a fundamental conception of rhetorical context. The actual information it delivers, however, seems thin and commonplace. One reason for that impression is that the ideas are typically cast in the form of vague generalities--generalities that prompt the confused reader to ask marginally: "In every case?" "Exactly how large?" "Why?" "But how many?" Stylistically, the C paper has other shortcomings as well: the opening paragraph may not draw the reader in; the final paragraph may offer only a perfunctory wrap-up; the transitions between paragraphs are often bumpy; the sentences, besides being a bit choppy, may follow a predictable (hence monotonous) subject-verb-object order; and the diction is occasionally marred by unconscious repetitions, redundancy, and imprecision. The C paper, then, while it gets the job done, lacks both imagination and intellectual rigor, and hence does not invite a rereading.
- B paper: It is significantly more than competent. Besides having few mechanical errors, the B paper delivers substantial information--that is, substantial in both quantity and interest-value. Its specific points are logically ordered, well developed, and unified around a clear organizing principle that is apparent early in the essay. The opening paragraph draws the reader in; the closing paragraph is both conclusive and thematically related to the opening. The transitions between paragraphs are for the most part smooth, the sentence structures varied. The diction of the B paper is typically more concise and precise than that found in the C paper. On the whole, then, a B paper offers substantial information with few distractions.
- A paper: Perhaps the principle characteristics of the A paper are its rich content and its organic unity. Some people describe the content as "meaty," others as "dense," still others as "packed." Whatever, the content is such that the reader feels significantly enlightened by his reading, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. The A paper is a whole statement, unified by its excellent use of style and structure: the title and opening paragraph are well chosen; the transitions are smooth; the diction is precise and effective in context; the sentence structure appropriately reflects the content; the tone enhances the purposes of the paper. Finally, the A paper, because of its careful organization and development, imparts a feeling of wholeness and unusual clarity. Not surprisingly, then, it leaves the reader satisfied.

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