

GRADING CRITERIA

- F paper: Its treatment of the subject is superficial; its theme lacks discernible organization; its prose is garbled or stylistically primitive. 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 as yet only rudimentary. 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, in fact, often gives the impression of having been conceived and written in haste.
- C paper: It is generally competent--it meets the assignment, has few mechanical errors, and is reasonably well organized and developed. 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 does little to draw the reader in; the final paragraph offers only a perfunctory wrap-up; the transitions between paragraphs are often bumpy; the sentences, besides being a bit choppy, tend to follow a predictable (hence monotonous) subject-verb-object; 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 being almost free of 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 paper. 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 pleasingly varied. The diction of the B paper is typically much more concise and precise than that found in the C paper. Occasionally, it even shows distinctiveness--i.e., finesse and memorability. On the whole, then, a B paper makes the reading experience a pleasurable one, for it offers substantial information with few distractions.
- A paper: Perhaps the principle characteristic of the A paper is its rich content. Some people describe that content as "meaty," others as "dense," still others as "packed." Whatever, the information delivered is such that one feels significantly taught by the author, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. The A paper is also marked by stylistic finesse: the title and opening paragraph are engaging; the transitions are artful; the phrasing is tight, fresh, and highly specific; the sentence structure is varied; 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 feeling bright, thoroughly satisfied, and eager to reread the piece.