Grading Criteria

The A Paper

1. It not only fulfills the assignment but does so in a fresh and mature way. The paper is exciting to read; it accommodates itself well to its intended audience.
2. The evidence is detailed and used persuasively and where appropriate; citations are used effectively where appropriate and are formatted correctly.
3. The organization gives the reader a sense of the necessary flow of the argument or explanation. Paragraphs are fully developed and follow naturally from what precedes them; the conclusion reinforces the reader's confidence in the writer's control of the argument. Organizational guides are used as appropriate.
4. The prose is clear, apt, and occasionally memorable. The paper contains few, if any, errors of grammar, mechanics, word choice or expression, none of which undermines the overall effectiveness of the paper.

The B Paper

1. The assignment has been followed and fulfilled at a better-than-average level. The paper appropriately addresses its intended audience.
2. The evidence is detailed and persuasive. The paper may sometimes rely too heavily on the obvious, though the writer does not consistently settle for the obvious. The reasoning is better than adequate: it is thoughtful, with awareness of other points of view.
3. The introduction and conclusion are clear, but perhaps not as forceful as they could be. Most paragraphs follow well and are appropriately divided, though one or two could be better placed and developed.
4. The expression is more than competent. Not only is sentence structure correct, but subordination, emphasis, sentence length, and variety are used effectively. Some sentences could be improved, but it would be surprising to find serious sentence errors, such as comma splices, fragments, or fused sentences, in a B paper. Punctuation, grammar, and spelling reveal proficient use of the conventions of edited American English.

The C Paper

1. The assignment has been followed at a satisfactory level. The paper presents an appropriate thesis. However, the thesis may be too broad or general, or its presentation may be problematic in some way—e.g., the intended audience may, for various reasons, have trouble immediately discerning the thesis.
2. For the most part, the argument is supported with evidence. However, while an effort has clearly been made to find and use the best sort of evidence, the evidence is likely to be obvious; the paper may even lack some pertinent information. The reasoning, while generally sound, is predictable; or the reasoning, while generally good, is occasionally flawed. There is some awareness of other points of view.
3. There is an implicit sense of organization, but several paragraphs and/or sentences within paragraphs are misplaced to the extent that the organizational structure is recognizable but disjointed.
4. Sentence structure is generally correct, although the writer may show limited competence with sentence effectiveness, failing to use such elements as subordination, sentence variety, and modifiers to achieve emphasis. A C paper may thus be characterized by a "wooden" style. Comma splices, unintentional fragments, and fused sentences—errors that betray inadequate understanding of sentence structure—may occasionally crop up. The vocabulary is fairly limited. The paper may contain errors in spelling, mechanics, and grammar that reveal unfamiliarity with conventions of edited American English. (While a C paper may differ from a B paper in containing some errors in mechanics, grammar, vocabulary or expression, note that too many errors of this sort will quickly change a C paper to a D or F paper.)
The D Paper

1. There is a poor sense of audience and a limited sense of purpose. The purpose or thesis cannot be discerned without significant work on the part of the reader.
2. Necessary evidence is out of order and/or missing; irrelevant evidence may instead be present. The reasoning will necessarily be flawed.
3. The organization is difficult to discern. The introduction is unclear or nonexistent, paragraphs are not well-developed or arranged, transitions are incorrect or missing.
4. There are numerous errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The diction and/or syntax may be so weak that sentences are sometimes incomprehensible for the intended audience, although experienced readers can make sense of what is written. Lack of proofreading may turn an otherwise adequate paper into a D paper.

The F Paper

1. It is off the assignment. The thesis is unclear; the paper moves confusedly in several directions. It may even fall seriously short of minimum length requirements.
   and/or
2. There is virtually no evidence, or the attribution of evidence is problematic or has been neglected.
   and/or
3. The organization seems to a significant degree haphazard or arbitrary.
   and/or
4. Numerous and consistent errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction or syntax hinder clarity or even basic communication. Some sentences are incomprehensible.

Close Window