



Detailed Essay Grading Rubric

Program in Rhetoric and Composition—Standard Essay Assessment Rubric

Grade	Ideas	Organization	Language	Research conventions
A (100-90%)	This type of essay demonstrates exceptional competence . The central ideas are original, distinctive, substantially developed and supported with details and illustrations. An informed awareness of the issues surrounding the topic is demonstrated with an insightful, wellarticulated, and original analytical argument.	As a whole, the essay <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has an appropriate title;• provides pertinent background information to the reader;• focuses its topic with a provocative or original thesis statement;• develops all paragraphs fully and coherently by presenting ideas descriptively and clearly;• renders support for the thesis statement in an appropriate sequence of paragraphs;• concludes effectively, provocatively, and creatively.	The essay <ul style="list-style-type: none">• displays phrasing that is concise, original, and highly specific;• includes varied and effective sentence structure;• demonstrates an understanding of basic terminology. <p>In regard to syntax and mechanics, the essay is free of errors in usage, punctuation, and sentence structure.</p>	The essay <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers relevant and interesting supporting information;• analyzes thoroughly, making specific references to primary and secondary texts;• incorporates quotations into the essay effectively and artfully;• consistently uses a documentation style, following its conventions for internal citations;• provides a list of works cited following the appropriate bibliographic conventions.



<p>B (89-80%)</p>	<p>This type of essay demonstrates competence. It addresses a complex topic and articulates a clear and sophisticated argument with adequate detail and insight. Some issues surrounding the topic are appropriately addressed, and the presentation of evidence and analysis is well organized.</p>	<p>As a whole, the essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has an appropriate title;• provides pertinent background information to the reader;• presents a plausible thesis;• develops all paragraphs fully;• renders support for the thesis statement in an appropriate sequence of paragraphs;• has paragraphs featuring specific points that are logically ordered;• has paragraphs that are connected with helpful—though not always smooth—transitions;• ends with an effective conclusion.	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• includes varied and effective sentence structure;• uses basic terminology adequately. <p>In regard to syntax and mechanics, the essay is not free of errors in usage, punctuation, and sentence structure, but such errors do not impede readability.</p>	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers relevant and specific supporting information;• makes specific references to primary and secondary texts;• incorporates quotations smoothly with appropriate tagging;• makes use of a documentation style, following its conventions for internal citations, without systematic errors;• provides a list of works cited following the appropriate bibliographic conventions.
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<p>C (79-70%)</p>	<p>This type of essay suggests competence. The central ideas are apparent, if not always clear. The ideas need development (more details, illustrations, and supporting evidence for claims). Few issues surrounding the topic are considered, and their treatment offers slight insight or detailed analysis. The presentation of evidence and analysis is loosely organized.</p>	<p>As a whole, the essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has an adequate title;• provides some pertinent background information;• offers a general thesis and tries to develop it;• presents paragraphs that support the thesis;• has paragraphs with fairly developed ideas, but which often fail to address ambiguities that might confuse the reader (unwarranted generalizations; vague cause and effect relationships; weak textual relevance);• links ideas with transitions, although the transitions may be awkward or insufficient;• ends with an adequate conclusion, although it is often a mere summary of the essay.	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is characterized by predictable sentence patterns (simple; compound);• consists of pedestrian diction or words that often are not sufficiently specific;• uses basic terminology adequately but not insightfully. <p>In regard to syntax and mechanics, the essay may contain noticeable errors in usage, punctuation, sentence structure (comma splices, fused sentences, sentence fragments, subject-verb agreement errors, misplaced modifiers, and word confusion) that interfere with readability.</p>	<p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• avoids gratuitous summary of a text;• incorporates quotations in a predictable or formulaic manner and sometimes with an inadequate tag;• provides some relevant supporting information for claims made;• makes minimal effective reference to primary and secondary texts (either as quotation or paraphrase);• makes use of a documentation style, but with recurring errors in regard to its conventions;• provides a list of works cited using the appropriate bibliographic form.
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D (69-60%)	This type of essay suggests incompetence . There is no central idea that is apparent. The ideas need considerably more development and support. The major issues surrounding the topic are not considered, and the content is marked by a minimal degree of analytical depth or insight. The writing is poorly organized.	As a whole, the essay <ul style="list-style-type: none">• lacks an adequate title;• fails to provide important background information;• includes a thesis that is too general/or one that is not supported because the essay slips into mere summary of a referenced text;• has little or no specific textual evidence;• has several underdeveloped paragraphs;• tends to lack coherence and transitional markers;• lacks careful proofreading;• lacks a well-developed conclusion or may omit the conclusion entirely.	The essay <ul style="list-style-type: none">• presents numerous sentence-level errors, suggesting poor linguistic competence;• uses terminology incorrectly;• is characterized by unvarying and simple sentence patterns (e.g., brief s-v-o sentences);• exhibits limited, confusing or inappropriate diction. In regard to syntax and mechanics, the essay displays frequent errors in usage, punctuation, sentence structure (comma splices, fused sentences, sentence fragments, agreement errors, misplaced modifiers, word confusion); there are enough errors to hinder significantly the reader's comprehension.	The essay <ul style="list-style-type: none">• offers minimal or no specific textual evidence (relying instead on a broad summary or vague generalizations);• may attempt to use a documentation style, but it is inconsistently used or presents many errors in the documentation of sources;• may lack a list of works cited.
F (59-0%)	This type of essay demonstrates incompetence by featuring all of the shortcomings of a D paper but to a greater degree, or it does not meet the assignment task.			