

Grading Criteria for Expository Papers
as Suggested by the Freshman English Policy Committee

- F paper: ^{may simply} It fails to meet the assignment, ^{More typically,} or its treatment of the subject is superficial; ^{it} its ^{theme} lacks discernible organization; its prose is garbled; ^{it} it with ^{contains} frequent mechanical errors. In short, the ideas, organization, and style fall far below acceptable college writing.
- D paper: Its treatment and development of the subject are ^{still rather superficial.} ~~as yet only rudimentary.~~ While ^{some} organization is present, it is neither clear nor effective. Sentences are ^{often} frequently awkward, ambiguous, and marred by serious mechanical errors. Evidence of careful proofreading is scanty, if not nonexistent. ~~For all these reasons, the paper often gives the impression of having been conceived and written in haste. Finally, the writer shows only dim awareness of his audience and purpose.~~
- C paper: It is generally competent for its course level--it meets the assignment, has few mechanical errors, and ^{is} 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, ^{often} the C paper ^{these} has other shortcomings: ~~as well:~~ the opening paragraph does little to draw the reader in; the final paragraph offers only a mechanical wrap-up; the transitions between paragraphs are ~~often~~ missing or illogical; the sentences, besides being a bit choppy, tend to follow a predictable (hence monotonous) subject-verb-object pattern; and the diction is ~~occasionally~~ marred by wordiness, imprecision, and unnecessary repetition of words and phrases. The C paper, then, while it gets the job done, lacks both imagination and intellectual rigor, and hence does not invite a rereading. ^(shows a fair grasp of the rhetorical context, #)
- B paper: ^{an average paper for its course level.} It is significantly better than ~~competent, again as considered with respect to its course level, and meets the assignment.~~ Besides being free of serious mechanical errors, the B paper delivers information in such a way that it seems 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 varied. The diction of the B paper is typically much more concise and accurate than that found in the C paper. Occasionally, it even shows distinctiveness. On the whole, then, a B paper ~~makes the reading experience a pleasurable one, for it offers substantial information with few distractions.~~
- A paper: ^{One major} 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 is delivered in such a way that one feels significantly enlightened by the author, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. ^{Another major characteristic is} The A paper is also marked by stylistic flair: the title and opening paragraph are engaging; the transitions are smooth; the phrasing is tight, fresh, and precise; the sentence structure is pleasingly 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 ^(unity) and unusual clarity. Not surprisingly, then, it leaves the reader satisfied and informed--sometimes even eager to reread the piece.

Note:

The Grading Criteria sheet was revised and retyped last Thursday (Nov. 30); then more revisions were made interlinearly on Dec. 3, these last revisions incorporating some of Tom Cameron's suggestions.

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.