

Assigning Grades

Grading papers can be a difficult process, and it isn't always subjective. Assuming that I didn't like your topic or worse yet I don't like you is always completely false. The definition of insanity attributed to Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, Rita May Brown and a host of others states that insanity is when you repeat the same thing over and over and expect a different result. Take a moment and consider how these wise (or crazy) words apply to your writing.

In an effort to simplify this for you, here is a guide to think about and assess your own paper.

The Elusive, Mysterious "A" Paper

- An *A* paper develops a clear central idea with originality and depth of thought and displays a consistent sense of audience. Its topic is interesting, challenging, focused, and developed by clear and logical supporting ideas.
- The writing demonstrates a clear command of style; the language is fresh, engaging, and often figurative.
- The organization is sound and readily apparent but not overly strained ("first," "second," "third," and the like). Each paragraph has a clearly evident central idea, which is well supported by thoughtfully chosen specific details and examples. Paragraphs are appropriately organized and smoothly linked to the preceding and following ones.
- Sentences are clearly constructed and demonstrate effective variety in length and pattern. Words are precise and accurate and convey a consistent, appropriate tone.
- The paper is free of common errors in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics; words are correctly spelled.

The "B" Paper

- A *B* paper has a clearly stated central idea but lacks originality of thought. It displays a good sense of audience but at times loses track of the intended readers. Its topic is interesting, focused, adequately and logically developed.
- The writing demonstrates marked competence and occasional stylistic flair but lacks the command of style and language which characterizes the *A* paper.
- Organization is correct and clear but a bit strained. Each paragraph has a central idea, appropriate organization, and competent development. Transitions between paragraphs are generally but not always smooth.
- Sentences display the same characteristics as those in *A* papers, with perhaps a little less variation in length and pattern. Word choice and tone are effective.
- The paper is essentially free of common errors in grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and spelling.

The "C" Paper

- A *C* paper has a reasonably clear central idea and shows an adequate grasp of audience. Its focus is generally apparent but blurred in places. Its development is sketchy in spots.
- The writing demonstrates college-level proficiency but generally lacks the stylistic features of the *A* or *B* paper.

- Organization is satisfactory but a bit unclear in places. Most paragraphs have a central idea and some sense of organization, but development is vague at times and transitions between paragraphs often lack smoothness.
- Sentences are generally satisfactory but show little variation in length and pattern. Word choice is acceptable but not always precise, and the tone is somewhat inconsistent.
- Although the paper is generally free of serious errors, there are some mistakes in grammar, punctuation, mechanics, or spelling.

The “D” Paper

- A *D* paper may state but does not adequately develop and sustain a clear central idea. The sense of audience is either inconsistent or totally lacking in places. The topic is not properly focused and suffers from weak development.
- No sense of style is evident, the language is uninspired, and the writing generally does not suggest college-level proficiency.
- There is some sense of organization, but it frequently breaks down or is hard to follow. Not all paragraphs exhibit a central idea, and development is often vague and lacking in specifics. Transitions are frequently poor, sometimes lacking.
- Awkward sentences occur frequently, incorrect ones occasionally. Words are improperly used and tone is inappropriate and inconsistent.
- Errors in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics occur with some frequency, as do spelling errors.

The “F” Paper

- An *F* paper fails to state or develop any semblance of a central idea and has no notion of audience or topic.
- The writing is loose, imprecise, ambiguous, and characterized by many errors, most of which a college student should not commit.
- No organization is evident. The paper exhibits no paragraphing or consistent improper paragraphing.
- Awkward, and especially incorrect, sentences predominate. Words are consistently misused. Many errors in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics occur throughout the paper. Spelling errors abound.