

How to Achieve College Level Writing!

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF WRITTEN MATERIAL

A What is considered a good paper?

To what degree have you followed the following criterion?

- ❖ Substantively answered the question as posed or (if question is not assigned) clearly state what, and answer the question(s) is being addressed.
- ❖ number of substantive points made (and, each point made once, no extra points for repetition)
- ❖ Explicit reference to and use of ideas from: reading assignments, lectures, movies, and websites – as well as from other sources (and use more than just websites; and use of credible sources, a good paper uses at least ten or more rigorous references).
- ❖ Demonstrated thoughtfulness, insight, and understanding
- ❖ Inclusion of examples that shows clearly what you are talking about
- ❖ Specificity, as opposed to vagueness and ambiguity
- ❖ Clarity and understandability
- ❖ Apparent investment of time and effort (evidence of editing and multiple drafts with attention to competent language usage)
- ❖ Does the paper teach the reader (e.g. the professor) something? Does it integrate ideas and show connection to other subjects you have studied (i.e. integrate your whole course o of learning thus far).
- ❖ Is the writing enjoyable to read, unique, innovative (Can you make the reader smile)? Is it moving and powerful?

B What is considered a poor paper?

- ❖ just parrots back material with no thoughtfulness attached.
- ❖ sounds just like everyone else's.
- ❖ puts the reader to sleep.
- ❖ goes on and on about your opinions regarding something with no substantive data, observation, or explicit reasoning underlying the opinions.
- ❖ obviously tossed off very quickly with little care – little evidence of editing or multiple drafts.
- ❖ sufficiently vague that the reader can't tell whether you really have any clue what you're talking about.
- ❖ **does not refer explicitly to course materials (readings and lecture and ideas).**
- ❖ Does not integrate ideas nor show continuity and flow of ideas.
- ❖ No clear Introduction with clear statement of questions and/or no clear conclusion that draws whole paper together.
- ❖ Plagiarism! Improper citations, no citations, etc...

C Issues of Style Relative to Grade:

Correctness of spelling, grammar, etc. are taken into account in grading to the extent they exhibit a systemic lack of care and concern for taking the time to properly edit (a few errors are OK... BUT! When these make what you are saying unclear or difficult to grasp, you are simply not writing at the college level.

The paper must exhibit use of a proper writing format style (e.g. APA, MLA, Turabian, Chicago, etc.) – style sheets are available in the library.

If you have problems with these then get to the writing lab for help!

- D **Some General Rules for Writing & Arguments Re: when and how to give more detail.**
A reasoned argument is about giving us the reasons for your position!
- 1 If you raise a question in your writing, **answer it!**....and explain and support it with your reasons!
- Exception: When you are raising the question you feel has already been answered by the text thus far and the question is raised as a rhetorical question to make the point.
- When you ask a question as a silent prod to the reader to ask themselves....usually done once or twice and then used as a conclusion to leave the reader thinking about what you have made them look at.
- 2 If you say things like “should”/”should not” or “must”/”must not” or “ought”/”ought not”....**explain why!**
- 3 If you say something will or will not happen....**explain how** that will or will not be the case and/or **why** it will or will not be the case.
- 4 If you state something as a fact, **tell us who**,**cite the source**. Cite with year and author in parentheses in text and have bibliography for all sources at the end (see APA or Chicago Manual/style).
- 5 If you use an unfamiliar term **define it...** **tell us what you are talking about or what you mean**. Define your terms, **all concepts that are central to your argument**.
- 6 If you are talking about the trends you see for society, a people, organizations, etc, do not generalize to the whole world (“the future for society will be....)
**tell us for whom are you talking?, where?, when?** (e.g. the United States versus, say, the third world..... People in developed countries.... People who are rich.....). **Tell us who and where** you are and are not talking about...and **why**.
- 7 Always tell the reader **what you are and are not going to talk about**, **clearly define what the question is or what the questions are that you are going to answer** in this paper/argument.(usually in the introduction)and do not lose focus of that! *If the topic is too much for short paper, tell us this and tell us then what part of the question you will address.* Tell the reader what you doing!
- 8 Use whole paragraphs (and *indent the first word and do not put an empty line between paragraphs*). One sentence does not stand alone as a paragraph (except if it is such a powerful point that your previous text supports the stand alone statement such that you let it stand alone to emphasize the point!). Have each paragraph make a distinct or related set of points and have each paragraph follow and be related to the previous paragraph and prepare and be related to the next paragraph (make good transitions). Proof reading is a good idea.....
- 9 Do not just say you think things are happening or not....and do not just tell what you see ...**evaluate it!!!** ...is it OK or not and why/why not; in what context; is this evaluation ever different, etc...**tell us why we should care!** *Tell us what you think of the thing you are describing and why.*
- 10 **Avoid the use of ad hominem attacks.** They are rarely deserved, true, nor helpful. They almost always weaken your attack among the intelligent and only appeal to the weak of mind.

11. **Reviews** of books (and/or articles, chapters, films, speeches, workshops, etc) should always include an attempt to address five separate areas: **a)** reporting what was said; **b)** an assessment of the argument or logic of the presentation; **c)** assessment of the methods or approach (e.g. appropriateness of method, evidence, etc); **d)** assessment of the degree of contribution or how important a point this is and to whom; and **e)** assessment of the organization and writing of the piece or quality of the presentation.

E Tips to Reading a Text or an Article -that will help you in pre-writing and research for writing...

- ❖ **Interrogate** what you read. Ask it questions. Demand answers. Shout at it.
- ❖ **Annotate.** Make the “text” your own. Underline, take notes, scribble in margins, outline on computer – write your response to what you read!
 - NOTE: annotations should demonstrate your use of ideas from your whole course of learning.
- ❖ **Annotate some more.** Mark up pages for organization. Look for key phrases like “First,” “Second,” or “Third.” Mark these with: numbers, exclamation marks, and/or asterisks.
- ❖ **Circle!** What is the puzzle the author is asking? Circle it. Make asterisks marks and exclamation points. If you do not think the question is answered, make a questions mark...
- ❖ **Underline.** What is the author’s main argument (or answer to his/her puzzle)? Find it and underline it.
- ❖ **Comment.** What evidence does the author provide in support of his/her argument? Assess this evidence and decide whether you think it supports his/her argument at all. Comment upon your assessment on the text. Do you agree or not? And why or why not?
- ❖ **Glossaries.** Look up any words you don’t know. Write down their definitions.
- ❖ **Critique.** Be critical but generous. Look for what might be valuable as well as what might be problematic.
- ❖ **Digest.** Take it slow. Annotate, interrogate and review. A text often needs to be read two to three times to fully digest and understand.

Specific Tips to Reading a Textbook

- ❖ Begin by reading the title and table of contents. Get a feel for the layout of the textbook.
- ❖ Look over the appendixes.
- ❖ Begin each chapter by glancing over the pages. Read all of the headings and subheadings. Read the boxes in the margins. This will help to familiarize you with the material you are about to digest.
- ❖ Read the chapter. Take notes on the high level outline and any key concepts (usually notes in bold).
- ❖ Review your margin notes and or other book notes.

F A Rubric Approach to

	<i>Evaluation Criteria of Writing Competency</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>Superior College Level Writing (ready for graduate level writing)</i>	<i>(A):</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Responds directly and fully to the question at hand. ■ Shows clear and obvious purpose. ■ Focuses clearly on one significant main idea or topic throughout. ■ Uses a clear and perhaps striking organization. ■ Contains relevant information with specific details and clear images. ■ The development is full and complete; the ideas are clearly connected. ■ The beginning captures the reader’s attention; the ending provides confident closure. ■ Uses mature sentences in a variety of patterns and with clear transitions. ■ Vocabulary is well chosen; uses expected terminology. ■ Contains minimum errors, if any, in mechanics, grammar, or spelling. ■ Meets appropriate format style for the topic. 	

2 *Above Average College Level Writing (good Baccalaureate level writing)* (B):

- Responds directly to the question and hand.
- The purpose is apparent but not made consistently clear or obvious.
- Presents one main idea or topic but the significance is less clear or the focus is less sharply clear.
- Uses suitable organizational plan, but may be more ordinary.
- The information supports the main idea but the details are fewer and/or less relevant; the discussion seems less complete or the ideas less coherent (well connected).
- The beginning and ending are generally satisfactory but ordinary or routine.
- Sentences are usually correct but sometimes awkward; their structure is occasionally repetitious. Sometimes lacking in coherence (transitions).
- Vocabulary is adequate but does not use the expected terminology fully or precisely.
- Some errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling but they do not effect reader understanding.
- Meets appropriate format style for the topic.

3 *Average (minimally acceptable) College Level Writing* (C):

- Gives acceptable response to the question at hand but may disregard part of the question.
- The purpose is vague and seems to shift.
- Presents main idea but does not state it precisely or differentiate it.
- The organization seems only slightly considered and somewhat haphazard.
- Discussion stays on topic but makes only general statements or tends to repeat or restate ideas rather than explain them; details are not specific, lack strong coherence (transitions).
- The beginning lacks creativity or does not seem inviting; the ending seems inconclusive. Both are sometimes limited or simple statements.
- Sentences are sometimes poorly framed, of limited variety, lacking in transition, and difficult to understand. Somewhat incoherent (the ideas are hard to follow).
- Vocabulary usually adequate but occasionally unclear; sometimes avoids or misuses the terminology of the field.
- Serious errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling that are not expected in college writing.
- Meets format requirements at a minimally acceptable level.

4 *Below Average College Level Writing* (D):

- The writing is an inadequate attempt to respond to the question at hand.
- The purpose is not obvious or seems confused.
- Does not present a single main idea, may drift from one idea to another.
- The work may have excessive paragraph dysfunctions (too short or too long) or not follow any obvious organization.
- The discussion digresses; very little information is given or what appears is not relevant nor correct nor cited.
- Insufficiently obvious beginning or end.
- Sentences are incomplete or poorly formed and often difficult to understand.
- Vocabulary is often unclear and excessively informal with incorrect denotations or inappropriate connotations (or occasionally it may be excessively formal and archaic).
- Serious errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling which are not acceptable in college level writing.
- Does not meet format requirements at a minimally acceptable level.

G

What is Plagiarism?

This Section is taken from Plagiarism.Org Website:

Here is an example of an APA style citing this article:

What is Plagiarism? (n.d.) Retrieved May 18, 2010, from http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/what_is_plagiarism.html

Here is an example of an MLA style citing this article:

What is Plagiarism? Plagiarism.org. Accessed May 18, 2010. http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/what_is_plagiarism.html

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. See our section on [citation](#) for more information on how to cite sources properly.

In Life, you get what you settle for...