

GRADING STANDARDS FOR COLLEGE PAPERS
PELLISSIPPI STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN “A” PAPER

An A paper is clearly superior to papers submitted in college-level courses. The paper demonstrates an exceptional level of innovation, originality, and/or control of language, structure, and content. Given the parameters of the assignment and the time allowed, there are no significant suggestions for improvement.

I. CONTENT

1. The subject is focused, significant, interesting, and manageable. It is exemplary for college-level work and fulfills the requirements of the assignment with sophistication in both thought and execution. It demonstrates an effective originality and/or a challenging level of academic/intellectual difficulty.
2. The paper contains sufficient, specific supporting evidence for assertions in the form of examples, details, and analysis. The supporting evidence demonstrates originality, thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and/or significant and appropriate research. Lapses in reasoning are avoided. When appropriate, opposing viewpoints are acknowledged and effectively addressed.
3. Supporting evidence from sources is accurately paraphrased, summarized, and/or quoted. Evidence is employed with discernment.
4. Evidence and analysis are adeptly balanced.

II. ORGANIZATION

5. The paper’s introduction leads smoothly and coherently to the thesis statement--i.e., it contains a well-developed introductory paragraph that provides an explanation of the topic’s significance and/or background/context.
6. The thesis clearly and effectively states the paper’s central point at the end of the introduction. It is precise and is neither too broad nor too narrow.
7. Each body paragraph contains a clear, precise topic sentence that supports the thesis. Supporting evidence is related to the topic sentence.
8. The paper exhibits a clear, unified organizational plan on both the paper and the paragraph level. Transitions and other connecting devices between and within paragraphs create coherence. Supporting evidence from sources is smoothly integrated into the analysis.
9. The final paragraph effectively leaves the reader with a conclusion that clearly stems from the evidence and the reasoning.

III. STYLE/EXPRESSION

10. Vocabulary is precise and of an appropriate level of diction. Denotation, connotation, and tone are effective.
11. Sentence structures are sophisticated and varied, with an appropriate level of complexity.

IV. GRAMMAR/MECHANICS/DOCUMENTATION

12. Sources are consistently and accurately documented according to the format assigned by the instructor.

13. The paper presents a professional appearance and contains very few or no typos or errors in spelling, grammar, or mechanics. It follows the assigned format.
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CHARACTERISTICS OF A “B” PAPER

A B paper is above the average standard for papers submitted in college-level courses. The paper demonstrates a level of innovation, originality, and/or control of language, structure, and content beyond mere competency

I. CONTENT

1. The subject is focused, significant, interesting, and manageable. It is appropriate for college-level work and fulfills the assignment requirements. It demonstrates originality and/or an above-average level of academic difficulty and challenge.
2. The paper contains sufficient supporting evidence for assertions in the form of examples, details, and analysis. The paragraph development is thoughtful and the reasoning is sound; lapses in reasoning are generally avoided. When appropriate, opposing viewpoints are acknowledged and addressed.
3. Supporting evidence from sources is accurately paraphrased, summarized, and/or quoted.
4. Evidence and analysis are effectively balanced.

II. ORGANIZATION

5. The paper’s introduction leads coherently to the thesis statement--i.e., it contains a well-developed introductory paragraph that provides an explanation of the topic’s significance and/or background/context.
6. The thesis clearly and effectively states the paper’s central point at the end of the introduction. It is precise and is neither too broad nor too narrow.
7. Each body paragraph contains a clear topic sentence that supports the thesis. Supporting evidence is related to the topic sentence.
8. The paper exhibits a clear, unified organizational plan on both the paper and the paragraph level. Transitions and other connecting devices between and within paragraphs create coherence. Supporting evidence from sources is integrated into the analysis.
9. The final paragraph may effectively leave the reader with a conclusion that clearly stems from the evidence and the reasoning.

III. STYLE/EXPRESSION

10. Word choice is effective, characterized by appropriate vocabulary, level of diction, and use of denotation, connotation, and tone.
11. Sentence structures are varied and of an appropriate level of complexity.

IV. GRAMMAR/MECHANICS/DOCUMENTATION

12. Sources are consistently and accurately documented according to the format assigned by the instructor.
 13. The paper presents a professional appearance and may contain some typos or errors in spelling, grammar, or mechanics. It follows the assigned format.
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CHARACTERISTICS OF A “C” PAPER

A C paper meets the standard for papers submitted in college-level courses. The paper is acceptable at the college-level and has satisfactorily met the requirements of the assignment.

I. CONTENT

1. The subject is appropriate for college-level work and fulfills the assignment, but may not be sufficiently focused, significant, or interesting.
2. The paper contains supporting evidence for assertions in the form of examples, details, and analysis. In some areas, additional evidence may be needed. The paragraph development demonstrates thoughtfulness, though it may contain some lapses in reasoning. When appropriate, opposing viewpoints are acknowledged and addressed.
3. Supporting evidence from sources is accurately paraphrased, summarized, and/or quoted for the most part, but there may be instances in which the source’s meaning or intent is misrepresented.
4. The balance between evidence and analysis is generally effective but not consistent.

II. ORGANIZATION

5. The paper contains a developed introductory paragraph that leads to the thesis statement, giving the reader necessary background/context about the topic discussed in the paper.
6. The thesis states the paper’s central point at the end of the introduction but may need revision to be less broad, less narrow, or more precise.
7. Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that supports the thesis. Supporting evidence is generally related to the topic sentence, although it may at times stray from the point.
8. The paper exhibits a clear organizational plan on both the paper and the paragraph level. In some areas, stronger transitions and other connecting devices are needed to create coherence between and within paragraphs. Supporting evidence from sources is integrated into the analysis, but in some areas the integration is insufficient.
9. The final paragraph stems from the evidence and the reasoning presented, although the connection could be made more clearly.

III. STYLE/EXPRESSION

10. Although word choice is generally adequate, at times the level of diction or tone may be inappropriate.
11. Sentence structures are generally varied, but in some places the phrasing is monotonous and/or overly simplistic.

IV. GRAMMAR/MECHANICS/DOCUMENTATION

12. Sources are documented according to the format assigned by the instructor, but there are some errors in documentation style.
 13. The paper has been edited and proofread, but a combination of typos and/or errors in spelling, grammar, mechanics, and/or format affect the paper’s credibility and/or readability.
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CHARACTERISTICS OF A “D” PAPER

A D paper falls below the average paper submitted in college-level courses. While there are lapses in significant areas, nevertheless, with revision, the paper could be improved to a college-level.

I. CONTENT

1. The subject is too broad, too narrow, too vague, or too simplistic for college-level work and may fail to fulfill one or more of the basic requirements of the assignment.
2. Sufficient and/or specific supporting evidence for assertions is not provided. The paper may contain several significant lapses in reasoning. When appropriate, opposing viewpoints may not be acknowledged.
3. Some sources are not accurately quoted, summarized, or paraphrased, and there may be instances where sources are misrepresented.
4. The balance between analysis and evidence from sources is ineffective.

II. ORGANIZATION

5. The introductory paragraph is inadequately developed, does not relate to, and/or does not lead to the thesis statement.
6. Although the paper contains a thesis statement, it may be too broad, too narrow, unclear, vague, awkwardly worded, or inappropriately located in the paper.
7. Body paragraphs are not organized by topic sentences, and/or topic sentences do not relate clearly to the thesis. Evidence intended as support may stray from the point.
8. The paper does not follow a logical organizational plan on the paper and/or the paragraph level. Transitions within and/or between paragraphs may be lacking or inappropriate. Supporting evidence from sources is often not coherently integrated.
9. The final paragraph does not stem logically from the paper's points.

III. STYLE/EXPRESSION

10. Vocabulary is often imprecise or inappropriate for college-level work and may include clichés, colloquial expressions, or slang.
11. Sentence structures are not sufficiently varied. Phrasing may be monotonous or repetitive. Logical connections between clauses are at times unclear.

IV. GRAMMAR/MECHANICS/DOCUMENTATION

12. Sources are not always given proper credit. At times, references are not cited according to the format assigned by the instructor.
 13. The paper does not present a professional appearance. Frequent typos or errors in spelling, grammar, mechanics, and/or format detract from the paper's credibility and readability.
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CHARACTERISTICS OF AN “F” PAPER

A F paper is below the standard for a college-level course. The student has not been able to meet the requirements of the assignment and/or does not show an understanding of college-level expectations in several areas: content and appropriate development, organization, use of sources, grammar and mechanics, careful proofreading, and format.

I. CONTENT

1. The subject is too simplistic and/or too broad, too narrow, or too vague for college-level work. Significant requirements of the assignment have not been met.
2. Assertions are not supported with specific and/or sufficient evidence. The paper contains frequent lapses in reasoning. When appropriate, opposing viewpoints are not acknowledged.
3. Sources are not accurately paraphrased, summarized, and/or quoted, and/or their intent is misrepresented.
4. Analysis and evidence are insufficient.

II. ORGANIZATION

5. The introductory paragraph is missing or does not lead to the thesis statement.
6. The thesis statement is missing or is not supported by the paper.
7. Topic sentences are absent or do not relate to paragraph content or the thesis.
8. The paper does not follow an organizational plan. Supporting evidence from sources is not integrated into the analysis.
9. The conclusion is missing or does not stem from the paper’s points.

III. STYLE/EXPRESSION

10. Language is simplistic, imprecise, or inappropriate for college-level work.
11. Sentence structures are not sufficiently varied. Phrasing is monotonous or repetitive. Logical connections between clauses are unclear or missing.

IV. GRAMMAR/MECHANICS/DOCUMENTATION

12. Sources are either not credited at all or are credited in a minimal fashion with a preponderance of missing or inaccurate citations. References are not cited according to the format assigned by the instructor.
13. The paper does not present a professional appearance. It contains excessive typos or errors in spelling, grammar, mechanics, and/or format that impede the paper’s credibility and readability.

ⁱ These Grading Standards are based on those from the College of Southern Maryland and are used with permission from the Department of Languages and Literature.

ⁱⁱ These standards were designed by the PSCC English Department’s Grading Standards Committee in Spring 2017.