

Evaluation Guide for Essays
Presbyterian College English Department

I. The instructor bases 80% of the grade on the general content of the paper with the following guidelines:

A. DEVELOPMENT

The writer presents enough effective evidence from the work studied, such as examples referring to specific actions or dialogue, to support the main idea of each paragraph and the thesis of the essay. The examples, which may be paraphrased or quoted, are accurate, specific, and significant enough to persuade the reader that the writer fully understands the work. The writer introduces quotations, places them in context, and cites sources correctly using MLA documentation.

B. UNITY

The essay has a thesis statement in the introductory paragraph that focuses the topic and fits the assignment. The thesis presents an insightful argument or point to analyze. The introductory paragraph clearly states the ideas that the body of the essay will develop to prove that the thesis is true. Each body paragraph presents one central idea in a topic sentence that supports the thesis. Every sentence following the topic sentence supports that central idea and avoids unnecessary plot summary. The writer analyzes each example to show clearly how it supports the topic sentence. The title and conclusion are appropriate.

C. ORGANIZATION

The writer arranges the paragraphs supporting the thesis and the details supporting the topic sentences in a logical and orderly sequence.

D. TRANSITION

The writer uses effective transition between sentences and between paragraphs to provide a smooth flow of ideas.

E. STYLE

Word choice and sentence structure are appropriate for college-level composition. The style is clear, precise, concise, and mature. The writer avoids wordiness and pretentious language.

II. The instructor bases the other 20% of the grade on grammar, mechanics, spelling, and related matters.

A. The instructor will subtract three points for each of the following:

1. sentence fragment
2. comma splice
3. fused sentence

4. disagreement of subject and verb
5. illogical sentence structure or incoherent sentence

B. The instructor will subtract two points for each of the following:

1. shift in tense
2. incorrect verb or verbal form
3. pronoun errors
4. misplaced or dangling modifiers
5. incorrect part of speech (e.g., the use of an adjective for an adverb)
6. illogical or incomplete comparison
7. violation of the principles of parallelism
8. usage errors (see the glossary)

C. The instructor will subtract one point for each of the following:

1. punctuation errors excluding commas
2. comma errors
3. incorrect spelling, capitalization, or formatting
4. quotation errors
5. shift in point of view
6. careless omission or repetition of a word or words or inclusion of unnecessary words
7. faulty diction (e.g, improper word choice, clichés, or language that is trite, colloquial, or sexist)

D. The instructor may subtract one to five points for any failure to follow specific directions.