

Grading Criteria

An essay in the A range is founded on an original, logical and coherently organized set of ideas; it makes a clearly discernible and persuasive argument (even if the reader disagrees with its argument; it is, at each turn, absolutely clearly articulated: words carry thought, they don't obscure it; its sentences use only the words their ideas require, not any more; its paragraphs have distinct though related roles in the essay's larger argument, each holding one thoroughly asserted idea (not two competing ideas, not one idea half-asserted); it accurately and thoughtfully uses other sources; and its sentences are without the grammatical, spelling or typographical mistakes that exacting proofreading would catch. (All of this takes *a lot of work*. If it is all very nearly accomplished, the essay earns an A-.)

An essay in the B range is a very good paper, founded on solid, persuasive thinking, the writing of which is clearly and effectively executed. What prevents an "A" is a lack of originality, thorough thinking, or careful proofreading. If two of these virtues are absent, the essay will earn a B-.

An essay in the C range: some conspicuous flaw earns an essay a C; its argument is really underdeveloped, it is disorganized, its diction is consistently inarticulate, or it is in dire need of proofreading.

A D essay either contains more than one of the large problems cited in the "C" description or finds another way to convince its reader that the author has not spent nearly enough time on the thinking or writing of the essay.

An F essay misses on all criteria (articulateness, persuasiveness, organization, the absence of writing mistakes).