

# A Framework for Letter Grades

Grading Students' Writing: Achieving Consistency,  
Perceptions of Fairness, and Learning  
Lynn Taylor, Ph.D.



Letter Grade	Research	Logic/Organization	Analysis/Integration	Answers Question/Makes Argument	Writing Style	Structure
<b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>used a variety of different sources</li> <li>most of the relevant authoritative sources were used</li> <li>sources reflected contrasting viewpoints</li> <li>discussion of viewpoints was supported well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>logical flow</li> <li>clear progression of ideas building on a central theme</li> <li>clear transitions between paragraphs and ideas</li> <li>effective use of transition statements and linking sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Original interpretation or application of information bordering on ground-breaking (A+)</li> <li>critically analyzed information</li> <li>integrated information by applying information/discussing implications</li> <li>original ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>makes the point</li> <li>relevant to stated purpose</li> <li>delivered on thesis statement</li> <li>backed up with powerful evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>few spelling/grammar mistakes</li> <li>consistent in tense and person</li> <li>use of creative expression</li> <li>typed, professional appearance</li> <li>accurate use of style manual</li> <li>acknowledged all sources, contributors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>intro states purpose, is explicit and grabs attention</li> <li>intro clearly states what the essay is about</li> <li>body reflects intro, shows logical progression</li> <li>body contains research evidence</li> <li>body contains the major expected elements</li> <li>body paragraphs are well-integrated, connected</li> <li>conclusion summarizes/integrates/discusses implications</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>used a variety of different sources</li> <li>at least 2/3 of the most relevant authoritative sources were used</li> <li>sources reflected contrasting viewpoints</li> <li>most viewpoints were supported well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>logical flow</li> <li>general progression that builds on a central theme</li> <li>some transitions between paragraphs and ideas</li> <li>under-use of transition statements and linking sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>some analysis of information</li> <li>presented analysis, but did not integrate it fully into argument</li> <li>thesis is not entirely clear, but argument can be followed</li> <li>opened the door, but failed to drive the point home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>good evidence</li> <li>evidence relevant to purpose</li> <li>shows thought and analysis, but lacks clear focus or pointedness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spelling/grammar mistakes begin to interfere with reading flow</li> <li>minor changes in tense/person</li> <li>generally good use of style manual- some inconsistencies</li> <li>some inconsistency in the typed format</li> <li>incomplete acknowledgments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>intro states purpose and grabs attention (2/3 of A)</li> <li>intro states what the essay is about</li> <li>body reflects intro, shows logical progression</li> <li>body contains research evidence</li> <li>body contains the major expected elements</li> <li>integration of ideas is less obvious, not as well connected</li> <li>conclusion summarizes/integrates/discusses implications but less clearly than A (2/3 of A)</li> </ul>
<b>C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>limited variety of different sources</li> <li>about 1/2 of the most relevant authoritative sources were used</li> <li>not all major contrasting viewpoints were considered</li> <li>viewpoints were stated with minimal or inconsistent levels of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>logical flow is not always evident</li> <li>lacks progression but expresses ideas that support an argument</li> <li>1 or 2 tangents (i.e. not stated in the intro)</li> <li>under-use of transition statements and linking sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analysis lacking or off track</li> <li>overlooked critical information in analysis</li> <li>have to work to follow argument</li> <li>generally lacked integration/ original thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>purpose generally addressed, but with weak evidence and argumentation</li> <li>weak evidence of thorough analysis and thought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>frequent spelling/grammar mistakes</li> <li>inconsistent in tense and person</li> <li>typed, but not professional in appearance</li> <li>inaccurate use of style manual</li> <li>acknowledged direct quotes, but not all sources, contributors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>intro states a purpose, but it is not clear</li> <li>body generally connected into</li> <li>body contains research evidence, but progression is not always logical</li> <li>body lacks some of the major expected elements</li> <li>integration of ideas is less obvious, not as well connected</li> <li>conclusion summarizes or repeats intro, but fails to integrate/discuss implications</li> </ul>
<b>D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>few relevant research sources were used</li> <li>minimal variety of different sources</li> <li>little contrast in viewpoints</li> <li>viewpoints generally lacked solid support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lacks logical flow</li> <li>lacks a progression of ideas</li> <li>frequent tangents that distract from main ideas</li> <li>generally lacks transition statements and linking sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>overlooked critical information</li> <li>faulty analysis</li> <li>no clear thesis statement</li> <li>can't follow argument</li> <li>no original use of information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>point not explicitly made, have to work to see it</li> <li>marked lack of evidence</li> <li>unconvincing argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>frequent spelling/grammar mistakes</li> <li>inconsistent in tense and person</li> <li>handwritten, with explanation</li> <li>misuse of style manual</li> <li>failed to acknowledge a number of major sources, contributors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>intro does not indicate purpose, seem irrelevant to paper</li> <li>body contains unconnected ideas</li> <li>body reads like a series of short answer questions</li> <li>sentences and paragraphs are not well connected/integrated</li> <li>conclusion does not reflect the paper, is too brief</li> </ul>
<b>F</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>little evidence of research references used</li> <li>presented a very narrow view</li> <li>viewpoints lacked solid support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideas are scattered, disjointed</li> <li>no logical flow</li> <li>no obvious progression of ideas</li> <li>lacks clear transitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>weak research</li> <li>no critical analysis</li> <li>lacks thesis statement</li> <li>no apparent line of argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>point not made or irrelevant to purpose</li> <li>little evidence for argument</li> <li>failure to make argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>frequent spelling/grammar mistakes</li> <li>inconsistent in tense and person</li> <li>handwritten, no explanation</li> <li>ignored style manual</li> <li>failed to acknowledge many or all sources, contributors</li> <li>plagiarism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lacks a clear introduction</li> <li>rambles, without obvious structure</li> <li>contains information, but it is not organized to form a clear position or argument</li> <li>sentences and paragraphs are not integrated, connected</li> <li>conclusion is very brief or missing</li> </ul>