

# Criteria for Evaluating Writing Assignments

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You should refer to this document from time to time to remind yourself of these criteria.

## Reflective Writings

Reflective writings (SRQs, Reading Journals) will be graded based on these criteria:

1. Demonstrates that you have **read** the assigned text carefully
2. Offers evidence of careful **thought** and interesting insight
3. Meets college-level **writing** standards

## Term Papers

For the longer written assignments, the following criteria will be used. The major categories as well as the sub-categories are ordered by importance. In other words, *Quality of Ideas* is of more importance than *Organization and Development*. The items in *italics* will receive more attention.

### 1. Quality of Ideas/Intellectual Engagement

- a) Does the paper offer interesting, important, and fresh ideas on its topic?*
- b) Does the paper reveal a writer who is curious and involved, a writer who questions, investigates, and reflects?*
- c) Does the paper acknowledge and investigate complexities, rather than oversimplifying the subject or glossing over difficulties?*
- d) Does the paper reveal a writer who uses language subtly, who sees deeply into ideas, who draws connections fruitfully, and who reasons logically?
- e) Is the writer's style appropriate for the audience and the occasion?

### 2. Organization and Development

- a) Can the reader discern a central claim (a thesis, a research finding, an interpretive claim, an argument) which is supported with appropriate evidence?*
- b) Does the paper maintain a consistent focus on this central claim?*
- c) Does the opening of the paper indicate the question or problem to be considered, and does it establish an appropriate rhetorical mode between the writer and the implied audience?
- d) Does every part of the paper advance the central claim in a discernible and effective way? Do the sentences and paragraphs form an effective sequence, drawing the reader along through a logical and reasonable argument?*
- e) Does the paper develop its ideas with effective examples, analysis, comparisons, evidence, or other convincing explanations?
- f) Does the conclusion leave the reader with a sense of why the central claim is important, why it matters? If appropriate, does it suggest ways the central ideas can be applied, or what the implications of the idea might be?

### 3. Conventions

- a) Does the paper conform to the conventions of Standard Written English in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics?*
- b) Is the manuscript presented in appropriate form?
- c) If present, do quotations and citations conform to MLA guidelines?

For both types of assignments, each criteria will be rated *excellent* (4), *good* (3), *adequate* (2), or *needs work* (1), with the total grade out of 12 points. The other side of this sheet contains details about how these ratings will be applied to the longer assignments.

### Grading Rubric for Longer Written Assignments

	<b>Quality of Ideas</b>	<b>Organization and Development</b>	<b>Conventions</b>
<b>4</b>	The ideas of the paper are interesting and fresh. The writer seems fully engaged and intellectually alive. The paper explores complexities and counterarguments productively. The language of the paper is alive, creative, suitable to the topic and audience.	The paper states its central idea clearly, makes evident why the idea matters, and investigates it consistently. The paper develops its material with convincing evidence and argument. The introduction and conclusion are rhetorically effective, and the paper flows smoothly and logically between them.	Grammar, spelling, mechanics, and manuscript presentation are fully correct.
<b>3</b>	The ideas of the paper are strong and convincing, if not wholly fresh. The voice of the writer is responsive to the situation and audience. Some of the complexities of the material are acknowledged and explored. The language of the paper is appropriate for the topic and occasion.	The paper states a clear central idea and sticks to it. The paper is easy to follow from beginning to end. Paper contains adequate paragraph and sentence logic.	The language conventions of the paper may not be perfect, but they don't distract the reader from the content of the paper.
<b>2</b>	The ideas of the paper are predictable—perhaps recycled from class discussion or summarized from readings and lectures. There's little in the paper that is distinctive to the author. The language of the paper may not be fully appropriate for the audience or occasion.	The paper lacks a clear and convincing thesis or central focus. The organizational structure of the paper is difficult to discern. Ideas are not well explained or supported.	Some errors in grammar, spelling, or mechanics are serious enough or frequent enough to distract the reader from the content of the paper.
<b>1</b>	The ideas of the paper are jumbled, difficult to follow, or contradictory. The writer's tone and language are not appropriate for the audience and occasion.	The paper is disorganized and seriously underdeveloped.	Significant language or presentation errors hinder communication.
<b>0</b>	The paper does not fulfill the assignment requirements.		