

Scoring Guide for the Common Final

Overview

Papers are to be read holistically, which means reading the paper as a whole and looking for consistent strengths or weaknesses, rather than single instances of a particular error.

Readers should also take into account that students have a relatively short time to respond to the prompt and do not have time to draft and revise. (Please note we do not penalize for spelling errors or simple word mistakes.)

The main differences between an A, B, or C is the development of the argument (examples, analysis, cohesion) and the level of the writing (vocabulary, sentence structure, standard written English)

Grades:

An **A** paper **makes a sophisticated and cohesive argument**. It responds to the prompt's demands by summarizing the text only briefly; it principally uses the text as a basis for the writer's own argument. These arguments have well-chosen and fully elaborated examples. The organization is precise, and the style makes use of complex language and sentence structure.

(Papers in this category might also be given a grade of "A-")

B papers present **thoughtful responses** to the reading and address the issues raised by the prompt in clear prose and with varied sentence structure. Arguments are developed with concrete examples. The writer has clearly understood the reading and has his or her own clearly defined arguments. Papers in this category often make several strong analytical points, but do not elaborate each one sufficiently or sustain a cohesive argument throughout the paper.

(Papers in this category might also be given a grade of B+ or B-)

C papers are **adequate**, but the examples are inappropriate and/or the analysis is significantly underdeveloped. Summary usually predominates in these papers. The writing lacks variety and the word choice tends to be simple.

(Papers in this category might also be given a C+ but NOT a C-)

C- or lower papers receive these grades for a variety of reasons:

The writer:

- Did not understand the reading or did not address the prompt fully.
- Did not show an ability to write without numerous and serious grammatical errors.
- Sentences showed little syntactical variety including short sentences, little use of subordination, overuse of coordination, fragments, persistent use of ESL markers.
- Serious problems with vocabulary.
- Examples were either overly brief, weak, or off-topic.
- Did not respond to the text at all.
- Did not structure the paper in a coherent pattern of thought.

(Graders can also give D's or F's in this category)