

Tips for Effective Grading / Commenting

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For a more comprehensive resource on writing in the classroom, see John Bean's *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass, 2013.

Some helpful tips for commenting:

- Focus on 1-2 of the biggest problems in the paper, rather than highlighting all mechanical or structural errors. Too many corrections can be overwhelming; it's often more helpful for students to target a few issues they can work on.
- If you do feel extensive grammatical corrections are warranted, try marking only a single page—this should be enough for a student to see their mistakes, and can save a lot of time.
- Comments can be given in bullet points for clarity and more importantly, speed!
- Try providing an even mix of positive and negative comments.

Evaluating students with mechanical and grammar issues:

- When grading or planning a rubric, consider how much you have weighted grammar and mechanics—what is the highest grade a student can get with poor grammar and mechanics? Does this evaluation penalize ESL students or those struggling with writing?
- While grammar and mechanics are important, you may want to consider weighing content more heavily, or you can offer a split grade for content / mechanics

If grammar and mechanics are central to your evaluation and commenting strategies:

- Rewrites are the best way to improve writing skills. Often students won't review grammatical notes on papers unless they are offered rewrites. Peer review sessions can take some burden off of the instructor when offering paper revisions.
- Breaking down writing to the paragraph or sentence level when reviewing grammatical problems with students can help address core writing issues—this may be a more effective way to address specific issues, rather than requiring a full rewrite.
- Require revisions before grading selected papers submitted with major, systemic errors. Refusing to accept papers with major errors can save time during the grading process and makes a statement to students that they need to be more careful editors—you can require students to go to the Learning Center to help with rewrites in cases where students are more obviously struggling with writing skills.
- Offer revisions after commenting to selected students only on a case-by-case basis. This is a great option for larger class sizes.
- If requiring or offering revisions, make sure you provide comments that clearly express what you want the student to improve.
- Don't forget about the Learning Center's Referral Forms—these can be obtained from the Art Department or the Learning Center in hard copy only, so don't try searching online to find it. Referrals allow students to register for regular tutoring sessions. This is a great option for ESL students, or those who need more systemic help than you can provide.

What you can do in advance of a writing assignment to address grammar and mechanics concerns:

- You can review grammar, mechanics, and paper-writing basics in class. It's a hassle, but will make your expectations to students clear, and can result in better papers that are thus easier to grade.
- Stressing your standards in advance of a writing assignment can help weed out students that are not editing properly from those who are struggling with the English language and need more individualized attention.
- Teach students to proofread. Studies show that students can catch up to 60% of their own errors if taught to proofread and are held to appropriate standards of correctness. By marking every error when we grade, we are training our students to rely on us as copy-editors.

Rubrics (the basics):

- Rubrics can be controversial, but studies show that students who are given clear guidelines for evaluation have less anxiety approaching writing, and yield results that are more in line with instructor expectations.
- If using a rubric, you should review them in class with your students.
- Even if you don't want to share a rubric with your students, they are a highly effective way to ensure fair grading of all students.

Tips for Preparing a Rubric:

- Consider different rubric formats based on your goals for grading and the assignment.
- Looser or more general guidelines in a rubric leave more room for subjectivity during the grading process, but can be less clear for students to interpret.
- Detailed point breakdowns can address concerns over fairness and equality in assessing student assignments.
- Make sure to calculate what the lowest grade a student can get based on your rubric. What grade would they receive if they had poor grammar but excellent content? Do these potential grades align with your assignment goals?
- Align rubrics with assignment descriptions and guidelines. If you ask students to follow a very strict format or research parameters, they should be part of the assessment.

Types of Rubrics:

- **See the following pages for different rubric examples**—Any model should be modified to fit particular learning goals and assignments.
- Detailed rubrics are not the only option. You may want to consider using rubrics that simply grade using 10 points—this may be a great option for shorter or lower-stakes assignments, and they make grading much quicker than more extensive rubrics out of 100 points.
- Some rubrics are weighted, meaning different categories receive varying amounts of points. This allows the instructor to emphasize certain areas (such as content, or organization) over others. Weighted rubrics are a great way to stress the learning goals of an assignment.

Evaluating your Rubric:

- Once you have drafted a rubric, go back to evaluate it—does it align with the written description of your assignment and the assignment goals?
- Avoid ambiguous language e.g. what does “well-written” or “well-organized” or “adequate” mean? These should be clarified in class or in the rubric itself.
- Are all discipline-specific terms defined for students either in class or via the assignment?
- Is it clear to you and the students what makes an “A” paper?

Basic Analytic Rubric
Can be modified to fit specific assignments

	Poor	Needs Improvement	Good	Excellent
Thesis	No overarching argument can be discerned.	Is confusing, contradictory or underdeveloped. Does not fit well with the scope of the assignment. Significance is unclear.	Exists and is comprehensible, if underdeveloped in places. May be overly broad or unoriginal. Significance is discussed.	Is original, creative, provocative and insightful. Is appropriate to the assignment's scale. Significance is clearly explained.
Evidence	Either no evidence is provided, or there are numerous factual mistakes, omissions or oversimplifications. Author vastly overstates significance of evidence.	Relies on few sources. Not enough evidence is provided to support author's argument, or evidence is incomplete, incorrect or oversimplified. Limitations of evidence are not well understood.	A number of different types of sources is used to support arguments. Provides necessary evidence to convince reader of most aspects of the main argument. Importance of evidence sometimes assumed.	A wide range of sources is used in creative ways to support arguments. Smoothly integrates broader knowledge to explain evidence. Student demonstrates the limitations of different types of evidence.
Organization	Essay has no clear organizational pattern.	Exists at the sentence level. Paragraphs lack clear direction, and the logic of the paper as a whole is obscure. Argument does not build. Introduction and conclusion are boring, banal or repetitive.	Exists at the paragraph level. The argument may not build as the paper moves. Fails to eclipse the high school five-paragraph essay. Introduction and conclusion are heavy-handed.	Supports the argument, which builds throughout the paper. Paragraphs and subsections of the paper are linked. Paper proceeds with a logic. Introduction draws the reader in; conclusion does not simply summarize.
Analysis	Fails to analyze. Issues of counter-evidence or alternative interpretations are not	Efforts at analysis are largely not fruitful. Author acknowledges some of the most obvious	Does not add much new insight into the subject. Author fully acknowledges counter-	Is persuasively argued. Identifies and explains counter-arguments or

	addressed.	counter-evidence and alternative explanations. There is little or no attempt made to respond to them.	evidence or alternative interpretations but does not effectively neutralize them.	alternative theories. Demonstrates an understanding of the limitations of the evidence. Ties into broad themes and ideas
Knowledge	Demonstrates little knowledge of the subject matter.	Demonstrates some knowledge of the subject matter but has trouble integrating it into the paper.	Demonstrates basic knowledge of the field and the key questions, events and themes that shape on the paper.	Demonstrates knowledge of the field and relates paper to broader events, themes and arguments.
Mechanics and Style	Mechanics and style are an obstacle to understanding. Writing is full of grammatical errors. Words are misused. Rhetoric replaces argumentation, and not very well.	Writing is confusing, in part because of errors in spelling, grammar, diction and usage. Employs hackneyed rhetoric and shopworn metaphors.	Writing is generally clear and comprehensible, although it may contain minor errors of grammar, spelling, diction or usage. Lacks original voice and draws on commonly used metaphors.	Writing is clear and concise. Good grammar, spelling, diction and usage all contribute to the paper's success. Stylistic innovations, rhetoric and use of metaphors all further conceptual understanding.

Holistic Grading Based on Letter Grades

Source: [Brooklyn College WAC website](#), adapted from Paul Halsall, Fordham University

Superior (A)

A superior paper consistently does all or almost all of the following:

- Thesis: Has an easily identifiable, plausible and original argument. Limits the thesis to a scope appropriate for the nature of the assignment and the evidence presented. Explains the significance of the argument.
- Structure: Has a structure that is evident and understandable, and that relates logically to the argument, which is developed throughout the paper. Transitions well between points or sections.
- Evidence: Is based upon primary and secondary source evidence. Is integrated and analyzed, not simply stated. Demonstrates an understanding of the limitations of its evidence.
- Analysis: Is persuasively argued. Identifies and explains counter-arguments or alternative theories. Demonstrates an understanding of the limitations of the evidence. Ties in to broad themes, ideas or areas of analysis.
- Knowledge: Demonstrates superior understanding of subject matter. Displays nuance in relating particular facts to broader context.
- Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar and diction are excellent. Correct use of punctuation and citation style. Minimal errors.

Good (B)

A good paper does most or many of the following:

- Thesis: Has a promising if not fully realized thesis, with some insight or originality.
- Structure: Generally clearly structured. Wanders or includes related (but not entirely relevant) arguments. Has unclear transitions but is well organized at the level of the paragraph.
- Use of evidence: Deploys evidence to support most points. Sources chosen are generally relevant and quotes are well integrated into sentences though not always analyzed to their fullest potential.
- Analysis: Acknowledges and explains counter-arguments, even if they are not always fully dispatched. May not fully understand the limitations of the argument being made or completely grasp its importance.
- Knowledge: Demonstrates understanding of the subject matter and relates facts to broader context. Makes connections to broader themes.
- Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar and diction are strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly. Only minor errors.

Acceptable (C)

An acceptable paper does most or many of the following:

- Thesis: Has a thesis that is vague or unclear, unoriginal or slight.
- Structure: Lacks focus, with weak transitions. Primary argument is repeated without development.
- Use of evidence: Evidence is used, but points often lack supporting evidence, or evidence used inappropriately (often because there may be no clear point). Quotes may be poorly integrated into sentences. Quotes appear often without analysis or analysis offers nothing beyond the quote.
- Analysis: May not address counter-arguments or deals with them hastily. Overstates the evidence in support of its argument. Misses connections to important broader themes and ideas.
- Knowledge: Demonstrates superficial knowledge of the subject, without insight into general themes.
- Mechanics: Poor structure, grammar and diction. Errors in punctuation, citation style and spelling.

Poor (D)

A poor paper consistently does all or almost all of the following:

- Thesis: Difficult to identify, restates obvious point, or is a ridiculous assertion.
- Structure: Unclear, often because thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Ideas do not flow, usually because there is little argument organizing the paper.
- Use of evidence: Very few or very weak examples. General failure to support statements, or evidence seems to support no statement. Quotes not integrated into sentences. Very little attempt to relate evidence to argument.
- Analysis: Simplistic view of topic; little effort to grasp alternative views. No understanding of limitations of argument or evidence.
- Knowledge: Does not identify general themes or attempt to link to them.
- Mechanics: Big problems in sentence structure, grammar and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation and spelling. Run-on sentences and other disorganization.

Detailed Weighted Grading Rubric

Source: <http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/assignments-exams/>

Grading Rubric for Term Paper

TOTAL: 100 POINTS (25% OF OVERALL COURSE GRADE FOR THE SEMESTER).

Important notes:

- Plagiarism will result in an immediate grade of 0. You are required to upload your essay via Turnitin.com (see instruction sheet on BBoard), which will detect if you have not cited sources in your essay, or if you have copied anything directly from any other text or source. I welcome you referring to other materials we have discussed in class or are **minimal** in terms of research –just please remember to cite correctly.
- Refer to my syllabus for further writing guidelines and carefully read the paper assignment for full details of the paper format and content.

Please seek assistance from the College Writing Center during the course of writing your essay. [\[insert WC url\]](#) or [\[insert email\]](#).

Grading Rubric:

Title “page”: _____ **/10**

[This information should be on a “front sheet” page, single-spaced. This page does NOT count towards your 3-4 pages. Double space once between this info and the text information below.]

Your Name

Title of Your Paper

The Artist’s Name (if there is one)

Title of work/object

The Date of the Work

Medium

Museum acquisition number

Image of your object(s)

Object label text from the Met Museum (you can find this in electronic format on the Timeline/Collection database).

Following of instructions: _____ **/5**

Is this essay based primarily on observations the student made while looking at the object at the museum?

Does the essay follow the instructions set out in the paper assignment handout and in class?

Is it the correct length? (if not, 0 points in this section)

Correct grammar and spelling _____ **/15**

(Correct spelling, punctuation & grammar used throughout. proper noun/verb agreement, correct use of writing voice, clarity of writing, etc. Correct punctuation used when describing works of art (either italics, quotation marks or underlining used for title of works of art, capital letters used for names of artists, brackets used for dates when appropriate. E.g. "Duccio's *Maesta* was painted in 1308". Or "Duccio's *Maesta* (1308) was painted for the altarpiece of Siena cathedral.")

Acknowledgement of sources/correct format for bibliography if any sources are used and/or footnotes: _____ **/5**

Any evidence of plagiarism = automatic fail

Introduction: _____/15

Is there a clear opening sentence that begins the essay well?
Is the thesis statement in the introduction and is it clear?
Do I understand what the essay will talk about from reading the intro?

Main Body of Essay - Quality of museum environment analysis _____/15

Has the writer thoughtfully engaged with the museum space, analyzing the formal aspects of the museum architecture and providing context about their own observations of the space during their museum visit?

Has the writer thought about the questions outlined on the "Museum Observation Prompts" regarding the museum space and attempted to consider elements of the social, economic, environmental, and political context of the museum?

Main Body of Essay - Quality of artwork observation & formal and contextual analysis ____/20

Does the essay "flow" well - do the ideas expressed by the writer make sense sequentially? Are the ideas expressed in the essay well-developed? (e.g. does the essay read like a series of continually-deepening and connected ideas or is it just a list of statements of fact?)

Does the essay clearly connect with the formal elements of the work? (e.g. materials used, line, tone, color, composition, medium, modeling - where appropriate).

Does the essay clearly identify the narrative of the work (painting, sculpture) and/or the function of the work or building (esp. architecture) and/or the use of the object (esp. ceramics, ceremonial objects, etc)?

Has the writer referred to the "Museum Observation Prompts" handout or used appropriate prompts that focus the paper on what they can OBSERVE through CLOSE LOOKING, and what they can then infer about context/geography/socio-cultural/political context from their observations?

Conclusion: _____/15

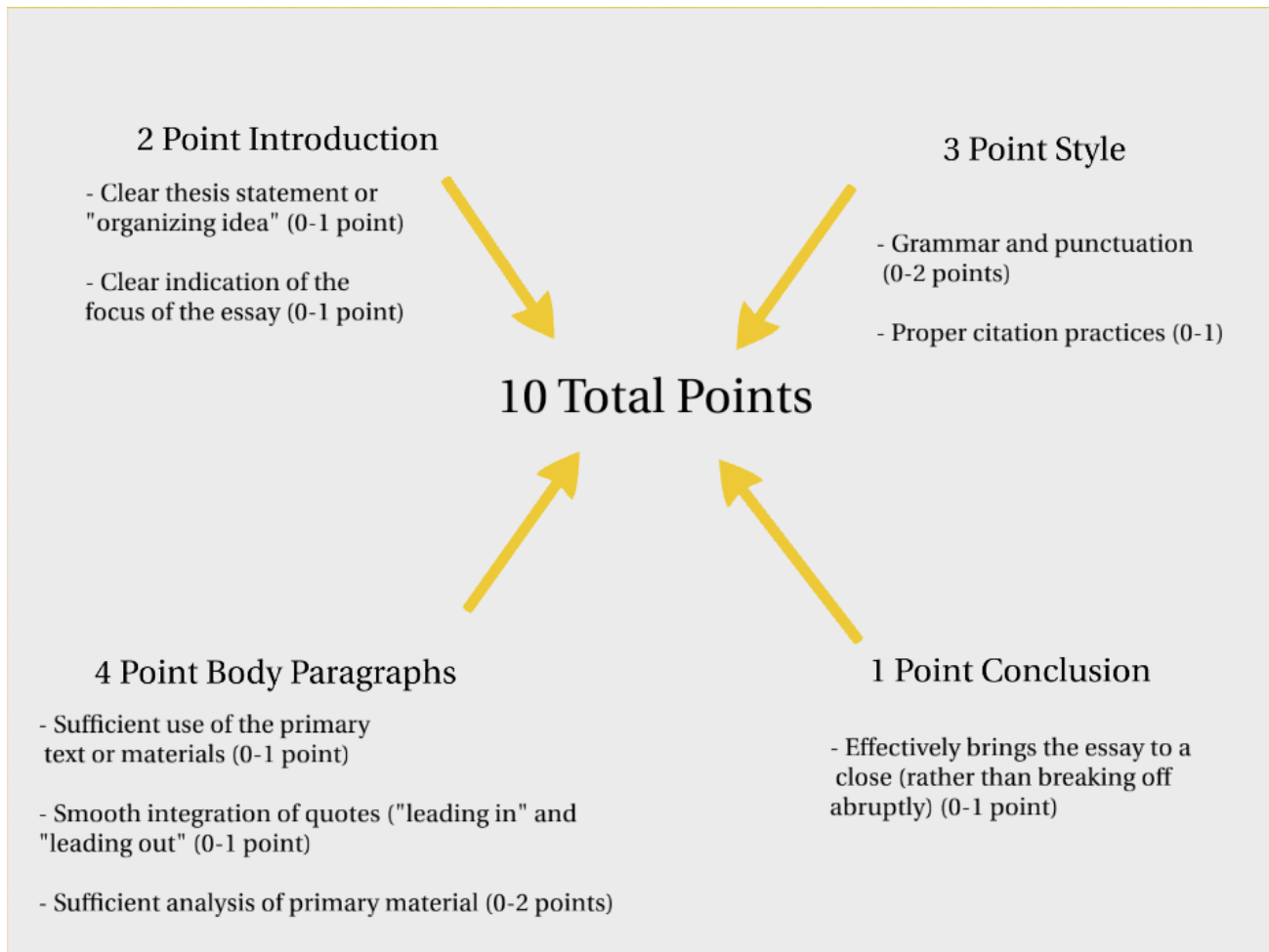
Does the writer manage to summarize and conclude his/her essay well? Is there a "final sentence" within a concluding paragraph that completes the essay satisfactorily, rather than leaving the essay mid-thought?

Total: _____/100

Comments:

10-point Weighted Rubric

Created by 2016-7 Brooklyn College WAC Fellow Amelia Greene



16-point Weighted Rubric

Created by 2016-7 Brooklyn College WAC Fellow Amelia Greene

Understanding of the primary text (1-4 points)

- Shows a deep and nuanced understanding by exhaustive description and analysis (4 points)
- Shows adequate understanding, misses minor components (3 points)
- Shows some understanding, misses major components (2 points)
- Shows little to no understanding (1 point)

Strength of Argument, Including Organization (1-4 points)

- Fully responds to the prompt, makes smooth transitions between all parts of the essay (4 points)
- Responds to the prompt, offers a coherent structure for their ideas (3 points)
- Addresses some parts of the prompt, sections of the essay are coherent but disconnected from each other (2 points)
- Does not address the prompt, sections of the essay are incoherent and disconnected from each other (1 point)

16 Total Points

Use of the primary text to support analysis (1-4 points)

- Smoothly integrates well-chosen quotes into their own exhaustive analysis, cites properly (4 points)
- Selects appropriate quotes, but does not fully integrate them or analyze them (3 points)
- Selects inappropriate or only partially appropriate quotes, offers minimal integration and analysis (2 points)
- Does not quote from the primary text (1 point)

Clarity of writing, overall style of the essay (1-4 points)

- Clear prose throughout, no grammatical issues (4 points)
- Clear prose with a few grammatical issues (3 points)
- Persistent grammatical issues, but not so severe that they impede the reader's understanding (2 points)
- Persistent grammatical issues that impede reader understanding (1 point)

Weighted, Point-based Rubric

Source: Jennifer Sarathy, 2016-7 Brooklyn WAC Fellow

Grading Rubric-Museum Comparison Paper

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Assignment Objectives | 15 pts |
| -Paper meets the assignment requirements. | |
| -Thesis is clearly written, concise and present in the introduction of the paper. | |
| -Paper includes full descriptions of both objects. | |
| 2. Argument and Support | 45 pts |
| -Paper includes focused points of similarities and differences between the two objects. | |
| -At least 3-4 visual elements are clearly <u>elaborated</u> in relation to both objects. | |
| -Visual elements are tied to specific points or conclusions that relate back to the paper's main argument. | |
| -Student has considered the art historical contexts and styles of each object. | |
| 4. Organization | 25 pts |
| -Student's thoughts are well organized and ideas flow from one to another. | |
| 5. Mechanics | 15 pts |
| -Grammar, Citations and Formatting. | |

= 100 pts- 20% of your course grade

Plagiarism: Plagiarism will result in a failing ("0") grade on the assignment and a consultation with the Dean of Students, as per the *Brooklyn College Statement on Academic Integrity*

Analytic Rubric corresponding to letter grades (all excellent would be an A, all good would be a B etc.)

Source: Prof. Malka Simon

	Excellent (25 points)	Good (22 points)	Satisfactory (19 points)	Fair (16 points)	Poor (13 points)
Interview	Questions are thoughtful, incisive, and yield much original information. Interview material is very well integrated with the research paper.	Questions are thoughtful and yield some original information. Interview material is well integrated with the research paper.	Questions are basic and yield a little original information. Interview material is mostly integrated with the research paper.	Questions are superficial and yield very little or no original information. Interview material is not well integrated with the research paper.	Questions are badly designed and yield no original information. Interview material is not integrated with the research paper.
Site/Building history	Clearly explains the entire relevant history of the building or site.	Clearly explains most of the relevant history of the building or site.	Superficially explains most of the relevant history of the building or site.	Poorly explains some of the relevant history of the building or site.	No explanation of the relevant histories of the building or site is provided.
Formal analysis	Thoroughly and critically describes the building or sites, using precise architectural terminology	Adequately describes the building or site, using appropriate architectural terminology	Superficially describes the building or site; architectural terminology is ambiguous or unclear	Poorly describes the buildings or site, using incorrect architectural terminology	No description of the building or site.
Writing quality	Text is well-organized with logical flow from section to section. Language is clear and precise. Sources are clearly and thoroughly documented.	Text is adequately organized with mostly logical flow from section to section. Language is clear. Sources are adequately documented.	Text is loosely-organized and lacks logical flow from section to section. Language is imprecise with some misspellings. Documentation of sources is imprecise.	Text is poorly-organized with little logical flow from section to section. Language is vague with many misspellings. Many sources are missing.*	Text is disorganized with no logical flow from section to section. Language is unclear with many misspellings. Sources are not documented.*

*Failure to document sources is considered plagiarism, and will result in an automatic F for both the paper and the course.

Failure to adhere to the deadlines for submission of the paper topic, bibliography, and interview materials (noted in boldface above) will result in a deduction of 2 points for each missed deadline.