

# Grading Criteria for Composition 101 Essays

The **“C” paper** carries out the assignment in a **competent** way. The C paper advances a reasonable thesis and offers some relevant support, but expresses them in vague generalizations or predictable and conventional ways. The pattern of organization is recognizable to the reader but may be formulaic or may not be the best for the purpose or audience of the paper. The voice and tone are generally appropriate. The style is essentially readable: There are few awkward sentences, few serious errors in wording, and few, if any, glaring errors in grammar and mechanics. The C paper typically relies on merely simple sentence structure, transitions are often weak or formulaic, and word choice may be imprecise or clichéd.

The **“B” paper** goes **beyond a competent response** to the assignment in several ways. The thesis reflects some originality or excites the curiosity of the audience. The development includes substantive support that is specific, interesting, relevant, and complete. The organization is clear, coherent and well suited to purpose and audience. Sentence structure shows variety, diction is well suited to audience and purpose, and the transitions function effectively to give the paper unity. The essay is generally free of distracting errors in grammar and mechanics.

The **“A” paper** is an **excellent** paper, an innovative, creative, and perceptive response to the assignment in all ways. The purpose is specific, and some depth or breadth of insight marks the clearly focused thesis. The support is not only interesting and relevant but boldly thought-provoking as well. The careful organization is not only markedly clear and coherent, but also reflects a particularly apt response to the rhetorical situation. The style demonstrates the high competence of the B paper as well as exhibiting finesse through the writer’s skillful use of stylistic elements to achieve specific goals. This paper exhibits an exceptionally sophisticated style and mature vocabulary beyond the high rhetorical competence of the B paper.

**The “D” paper** is one that **begins** to meet the requirements of the assignment, but is flawed in one or more of the following ways. The purpose may be confused or too general. The thesis may not be limited enough or clear enough. The support offered may not be specific, wholly accurate, or relevant, but in any case is far from sufficient. The organization may be unclear or confusing. The voice and tone may be inconsistent or somewhat inappropriate. In addition, the style makes it difficult for the reader to understand what is being said. The sentence structure is at times awkward; the word choice is vague or ambiguous; and the number of grammatical and mechanical mistakes is sufficient to be distracting to the reader.

**The “F” paper** does not meet the requirements of the assignment or **is seriously flawed in one or more** of the following: purpose, support, organization, voice and tone, or style. The severity of a single flaw, or a combination of distracting flaws, renders the paper essentially ineffective. Among the most serious flaws are: a lack of a purpose and/or lack of a controlling thesis that is clear, suitably limited, and on the assigned topic; almost a total lack of support; absence of any apparent organizational or developmental plan; a voice or tone that alienates the audience; or a style that is unreadable either because of vagueness and imprecision or because of the number and magnitude of deviations from the conventions of standard edited American English.