

Mr. Baker's Assessment Guide

The A Paper

The paper never strays from its purpose or mistakes its audience. The subject is focused, significant, interesting, and manageable.

The paper is thoughtful and well-organized. The organization does not seem mechanical, imposed, or formulaic.

Each topical paragraph has controlling ideas, solid details, and smooth transitions.

Evidence from the text is provided in appropriate places, introduced fluently and commented upon in a substantive manner afterward.

Sentences are varied in length and structure according to the author's purpose and emphasis.

Word choice is almost uniformly good. Words are chosen for precise denotation, connotation, and tone. There is no use of idiomatic vocabulary.

Mechanically, the paper is correct except for excusable errors of inadvertence and violations of extremely technical rules.

The B Paper

The paper has a firm purpose (strong thesis), but may not always affect the audience as the writer expects it to. Nonetheless, it is focused and interesting.

The organization is sensible, but transitions are sometimes strained.

Each topical paragraph usually has a controlling idea and good supporting detail.

Sentences are usually varied to suit the writer's purpose and indicate the writer's emphasis.

Word choice is generally appropriate for the subject. The writer goes beyond the automatic word to find one more precise and effective. Idioms slip in here and there.

The paper is generally correct mechanically, though there are some problems with grammar and punctuation.

The C Paper

Though the paper has some interesting parts, the interest is not uniformly maintained.

The purpose is not always clear.

The organization is acceptable, though some parts may be slightly awry. The essay usually has a clear thesis or principle of organization.

Each topical paragraph has a controlling idea and some support, though the support is vague or weak. There is little development of the analysis within the paragraph.

Sentences are not varied in length and structure.

The D Paper

Only in a few places does the paper find its purpose and audience. Too often it seems an unfocused exercise rather than an interesting essay.

Some principle of organization is apparent, but it is not successfully followed.

The paragraphing is rational, but the topical paragraphs are underdeveloped—often a series of generalizations or random remarks.

Errors in syntax are frequent enough to distract the reader.

Words are occasionally misused. Attempts to go beyond everyday vocabulary go awry.

The sentences conform well enough to the grammar of English as spoken by educated, but not fussy, people. They often fail to conform to written conventions.

Adapted from Doug Hunt, *Teaching With a Purpose*, Houghton-Mifflin, 1984.
(Courtesy Professor Eve Salisbury, Western Michigan University)

Combination Grades (B/A, CB, DC)

These grades indicate a combination of elements of two categories.