

## Essay Grading Standards (shamelessly stolen from Drs. Bachman)

**The C Paper** The C paper is an adequate piece of work, nothing more or less. The student has organized the material ably, employed details to support the generalizations, and handled mechanics satisfactorily. Although more might have been accomplished in any one of these areas, the C paper has revealed competence in them. What the C paper usually lacks is some praiseworthy feature: significant or fresh ideas, felicity of expression, or grace of style. Although containing little that is impressive, C papers explain an idea of some substance in a clear and acceptable manner. In general, they may be labeled satisfactory, average, or adequate, usually eliciting both favorable and unfavorable comments, and neither pleasing nor displeasing a reader.

**The D Paper** The D paper is deficient in one or major area: organization, support, or mechanics. If the writer makes numerous errors in mechanics, fails to organize the paper or paragraphs adequately, or provides insufficient support for generalizations, the paper should receive a D. It is important to remember that a D is a passing grade. Consequently, a D paper should contain several redeeming features despite its glaring weakness.

**The F Paper** The F paper is deficient in two or more of the three major areas: organization, support, or mechanics. But a paper may also be given an F if the handling of mechanical matters is so unacceptable that the writer would be unable to succeed at college work. Attaining a clear concept of an F paper is difficult because few papers are absolute failures: most contain some merit. The question is not whether there is some redeeming value in a paper, but whether the writer demonstrates sufficient ability to be given a passing grade. If the paper is difficult, frustrating, or confusing to read, it will receive an F. Usually the main problems in an F paper are faulty mechanics and inadequate support. In some instances, the writer may skirt numerous difficulties by using simple words and simple sentences to express simple ideas. A childish paper of this type should receive an F even though it may be devoid of weaknesses. Sometimes a poor student has worked very hard but progressed slightly by the end of the semester. To raise this student's grade because of effort rather than demonstrated ability is unfair.

**The B Paper** The B paper is not only competent in the major areas and also in the minor ones, but it excels in several. As opposed to the C paper, the B paper contains certain notable achievements usually in the areas of content or language. Although lapses may appear in a paper, they are usually trivial and sparse. More than compensating for them is the skill displayed in organizing and supporting ideas, in selecting words, in handling mechanics, and in treating the subject with judiciousness, maturity, and insight. The B paper is not outstanding, but it reveals fine work by an intelligent student who has demonstrated proficiency in most areas and excellence in some. Mere absence of error will not be rewarded with a B.

**The A Paper** The A paper need not be published in **The Atlantic Monthly**, but it is a superior piece of work that is a pleasure to read. Although outstanding it need not be flawless: many professional writers do not achieve that consistently. Usually the A paper surpasses the B paper in content, diction, and style. The A paper generally treats the subject in some relatively original matter, revealing keen perception, mature judgment, and sound logic. It develops in a style that possesses some grace, charm, and fluency. The A paper need not be perfect, but it should be a superior, outstanding piece of work for university undergraduates.