

Grading Rubric for Short Writing Responses

Each response should begin with a one sentence summary of your argument or position on the assignment, which will be supported by good reasoning and evidence in the remainder of the text. The first paragraph should introduce the reader to the problem, with the remaining paragraphs explaining your ideas about and/or solutions to the problem. In that context, you must demonstrate that your text is clear and interesting, and that you're engaged with the problem. Criteria for grading include whether: (1) you bring something new to the reader and provide an argument versus a data-dump of encyclopedic ideas without regard to logical progression, verifiable fact, or credibility; (2) the text is readable, appropriately written for the intended audience, and balanced; and (3) the piece is clear without significant grammatical and/or spelling errors, making it comprehensible.

- 6 – Meets all of the criteria presented above. The writer understands the assignment thoroughly, with the development of a strong thesis statement with supporting information that is presented in a balanced manner (that is, the writer does not spend excessive time on one main point while neglecting others). The response is comprehensive, reads smoothly, with appropriate transitions between ideas. Sentences are clear, without vagueness or ambiguity, and without grammatical or mechanical errors.
- 5 – Text is very good, but may be weaker in one of the grading criteria. It may have an excellent balance of presentation and the information is accurate, but there may be problems in sentence structure, correctness, or logical flow of ideas.
- 4 – This score means that the text is "good but not excellent." Typically, this text will demonstrate some working knowledge of the assignment, but may not be a balanced treatment. The quality of writing, including the summary statement, is noticeably weaker.
- 3 – A score of 3 demonstrates strength in at least one area of competence, and should still be good enough to convince the reader that the writer has understood the assignment and acquired some working knowledge of the information. The text typically is not written well enough to convey an understanding of various aspects of the assignment. The writer assumes that the reader already knows what s/he is trying to convey, and doesn't clarify the concepts necessary for clarity. The sentence structure is not sophisticated enough to convey a sense of hierarchy, logical flow, and mastery of the assignment.
- 2 – An essay assigned this grade is weak in all areas of competence, either because it is so poorly written that the writer can't understand the content or because the content is inaccurate or disorganized. The writer is able to convince the reader that some time has been spent in thinking about the text, but struggles to understand it.
- 1 – This score indicates that the writer has failed to meet any of the areas of competence outlined above.