

CRITERIA FOR SCORING ESSAYS

1. CONTENT, DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATION

High (Ranked 9, 8, or 7). The paper has an overall plan, point of view, and sense of direction. The thesis and the main supporting points are original and interesting, and are developed fully in a logical, persuasive, thought-provoking manner. Each paragraph is unified around a clear focus. The transition within and between the paragraphs is clear and smooth (without being mechanical), allowing the reader to move from point to point with a sense of coherence and momentum.

Middle (Ranked 6, 5, or 4). Content and organization are adequate but pedestrian. The essay has a main idea, although it is not clearly stated or kept in focus throughout. The content is skimpy - often short, one- and two-sentence paragraphs restricted to generalizations and commonplaces. The arguments are too one-sided. There is no clear organization, or it is too mechanical. Transition is lacking, or it is restricted to the simplest devices. The order of points is adequate but nothing more.

Low (Ranked 3, 2 or 1). No central idea governs. Obvious points are repeated in slightly different words. The essay pays lip service to the topic, but actually avoids it. (Essays that offer unreasonably one-sided arguments should also be placed in this category.) Points come in haphazard order, without coherence or a sense of direction. The paragraphing contributes little or nothing to the flow of ideas. Transitional devices are lacking or extremely mechanical.

2. SENTENCES (STRUCTURE, GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION)

High (Ranked 9, 8, or 7). The sentences are clear and demonstrate a variety of length and structure. There is clear evidence that the writer is able to use subordinate structures, and is not limited to simple and compound sentences. Errors, if any, are isolated and relatively minor.

Middle (Ranked 6, 5 or 4). The sentences lack variety in length and structure. The writer is able to construct familiar sentence patterns, but is prone to error and avoids sophisticated structures, such as parallelism, subordination, etc. There is reasonable control of the comma, but semicolons and other marks of internal punctuation are absent or used incorrectly or indiscriminately.

Low (Ranked 3, 2, or 1). There are errors in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation such as to obscure the meaning or seriously impair the flow of ideas.

3. WORDS (PRECISION, VOCABULARY, LEVEL OF USAGE, SPELLING)

High (Ranked 9, 8, or 7). Words are used precisely and imaginatively. The vocabulary appears to be wide-ranging. Wordiness and pretentious diction are absent. The diction is specific and concrete where appropriate—not restricted to the abstract and general. The level of usage is consistent, neither too formal nor too informal (except for deliberate effect). Misspellings, if any, are few, and not "glaring".

Middle (Ranked 6, 5, or 4). The phrasing is standardized, ordinary—sometimes hackneyed, never fresh. There is evidence of imprecision and wordiness. There are inconsistencies in the level of usage, especially in the

direction of overly informal expressions. Some jargon or pretentious diction is evident. Spelling is perhaps a noticeable problem, with some errors in regular words as well as in more difficult words.

Low (Ranked 3, 2, or 1). Imprecise and wrong words abound. The phrasing is vague, general, wordy. The level of usage is frequently too informal. Spelling is a definite problem. An essay written in an overly simplistic vocabulary may also get a Low rating, even if no word is clearly wrong. Similarly, excessive wordiness or gobbledygook deserves a Low rating.