

Grading Descriptive Writing



Levels 2-11

If a student desires to get an “A,” we feel he should know just how to do so! Feel more than free to share the grading rubric with your student as a self-proofing guide.

There are various point-to-grade schemes. Here’s the one that we recommend:
A+ 100-98 pts.
A 97-94 pts.
A- 93-90 pts.
B+ 89-88 pts.
B 87-84 pts.
B- 83-80 pts.
C+ 79-78 pts.
C 77-74 pts.
C- 73-70 pts.
D+ 69-68 pts.
D 67-64 pts.
D- 63-60 pts.
F below 60 pts.

If you alter the number of bullets checked in any row, the lost point system will not work correctly, but you may still reach a grade based on the descriptions under “Grading the Paper.”

A student should always be required to do a self-evaluation before submitting his work. Prior to handing in his draft, have him complete a proofing sheet (a checklist of those skills to which you think he can be held accountable). He can use the rubric in this document as his proofing sheet, or you can give him a list that includes more detail, if you so desire. We do not suggest that you give a grade for every level of student, particularly not for the younger students.

For descriptive writing, we suggest the following criteria as elements to be inserted within a larger, more general proofing sheet on his paper as a whole:

- * There is a clear topic sentence.
- * The general format is that of a descriptive paragraph, in which a story or descriptive details provide support for the topic sentence.
- * The student uses concrete nouns and vivid verbs, along with colorful adjectives and adverbs.
- * The student uses sensory words to describe the scene fully.
- * All paragraphs are properly formulated and have an ample number of vivid, descriptive facts. Particularly important is the choice of concrete and precise sensory words.
- * The overall flow of the paragraph is clear. It makes good use of transition words, phrases, or sentences so that the author carefully leads his reader through the scene. Often, this may be done by using time transition words (*first, then, after a little while, etc.*) or by using spacial transitions (*on the far right, beside, near, behind, etc.*).

Grading the Paper

- * “A” papers will have all of the above features almost completely correct.
- * “B” papers are graded down because of issues with one or two significant aspects. In terms of the grading rubric, a “B” paper would have the majority of marks fall into the “Good” column.
- * “C” papers indicate some real issues, and these can be with any of the rows of the rubric where at least half of the check marks fall into the “Fair” column.
- * “D” work is seriously flawed for any number of reasons. There are usually at least two of three main elements missing structurally, or two of three body paragraphs have serious flaws. Usually, structural issues alone will not cause a paper to be graded this low. The paper will also have problems with neatness, lateness, grammar and punctuation, or content. In terms of the rubric, usually most of your check marks wind up in the “Fair” to “Poor” columns.
- * “F” work is failing. As with “D’s,” “F’s” are not usually given for failure in just one area, like structure. Rather, it’s the result of a combination of failures that give the student an overall failing grade. In the rubric, almost all check marks would fall into the “Poor” column.

Numerical Grades

To reach a grade, work down the chart, checking off elements as they appear on your student’s draft.

- * You will subtract points for every check mark that does not fall in the “Excellent” column. Below is a chart that shows you how many points to subtract for each checked bullet point in a particular box. We are calling these “lost points.”

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Structure	-6 per bullet	-5 per bullet	-3 per bullet	-0 per bullet
Content	-6 per bullet	-5 per bullet	-4 per bullet	-0 per bullet
Writing Style	-3 per bullet	-2 per bullet	-1 per bullet	-0 per bullet
Mechanics	-3 per bullet	-2 per bullet	-1 per bullet	-0 per bullet

- * Add the total number of lost points and write the sum in the space at the bottom of the page. To obtain the final grade for the paper, subtract the total lost points from 200 and divide by 2.



Descriptive Writing

Name _____ Date ___/___/___ Grade: _____

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Structure (Only check 5 total bullets in this row.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> No clear topic sentence. <input type="checkbox"/> Poor or non-existent paragraphing for student's level; missing paragraphs. <input type="checkbox"/> Descriptions unorganized & do not support topic sentence. <input type="checkbox"/> Poor parallelism. <input type="checkbox"/> Did not follow assignment properly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic sentence not well defined. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraphs are too few, or are widely disproportionate. <input type="checkbox"/> Some descriptions not arranged logically & not clearly related to the topic sentence. <input type="checkbox"/> Faulty parallelism. <input type="checkbox"/> Didn't follow assignment well.	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic sentence could be better defined or presented earlier. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraphing good, but could use some improvement. <input type="checkbox"/> A few key descriptions do not support their topic sentence. <input type="checkbox"/> Some faulty parallelism. <input type="checkbox"/> Some variance from assignment instructions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear topic sentence. <input type="checkbox"/> Correct number of well-formed paragraphs. <input type="checkbox"/> Descriptions clearly & logically arranged under topic sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Perfect parallelism. <input type="checkbox"/> Executed assignment exactly as directed.
Content (Only check 3 total bullets in this row.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic sentence is insupportable or wrong. <input type="checkbox"/> Very few details are presented, with little or no vividness or descriptive interest. <input type="checkbox"/> Poor representation of required research.	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic sentence is not supported by details. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak on description; some is present, but it is rarely vivid. <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient research.	<input type="checkbox"/> Good topic sentence, but not the best choice of supportive details. <input type="checkbox"/> Many good details, but some lack vividness and descriptive interest. <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate research, but not outstanding.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong topic sentence, amply supported. <input type="checkbox"/> Many vivid, concrete details make the description interesting. <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent research is evident throughout.
Writing Style (Only check 5 total bullets in this row.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor descriptive writing. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are structurally inadequate. <input type="checkbox"/> Poor transitions; wooden or awkward statements. <input type="checkbox"/> Poor word choice. <input type="checkbox"/> Several instances of tenses changing inappropriately, disagreement between subjects and verbs, or missing antecedents.	<input type="checkbox"/> Overall descriptive writing is disappointing. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are mixed: some are good; some need work. <input type="checkbox"/> Transitions need much improvement; reader can't follow author's description. <input type="checkbox"/> Word choice needs much improvement. <input type="checkbox"/> Style errors like wrong tense changes or missing antecedents.	<input type="checkbox"/> Good, basic descriptive writing. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences lack excellent syntax. <input type="checkbox"/> Lacks excellent flow (transition words, ordering of phrases, and subordinate clauses). <input type="checkbox"/> Lacks excellent word choice. <input type="checkbox"/> Style causes some confusion: tense changes, missing antecedents.	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent descriptive writing. <input type="checkbox"/> Great sentence structure throughout. <input type="checkbox"/> Good transitions clarify the author's message. <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent word choice. <input type="checkbox"/> Good tense use, subject/verb agreement, and clear antecedents throughout.
Mechanics (Only check 5 total bullets in this row.) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Messy paper: inattention to neatness or improper formatting. <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuation/capitalization well below ability. <input type="checkbox"/> No citations (if citation required). <input type="checkbox"/> Spelling well below ability. <input type="checkbox"/> Spent inadequate time on this assignment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not as neat as the student is capable of. <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuation & capitalization below ability. <input type="checkbox"/> Many citation errors (if citation required). <input type="checkbox"/> Spelling below ability. <input type="checkbox"/> General aspect of paper is "a rush job"; not well done.	<input type="checkbox"/> Neat, but some formatting improvement is called for. <input type="checkbox"/> Several errors in punctuation/capitalization. <input type="checkbox"/> Footnoting/citation errors (if citation required). <input type="checkbox"/> Spelling errors. <input type="checkbox"/> Generally hurried; not as good as could be.	<input type="checkbox"/> Very neat, clean copy, properly formatted. <input type="checkbox"/> Almost perfect punctuation/capitalization. <input type="checkbox"/> Almost all citations are proper (if required). <input type="checkbox"/> Spelling is done well. <input type="checkbox"/> Careful work, excellently done.

_____ Total lost points

To obtain final grade, subtract total lost points from 200 and divide by 2.