Grading Criteria

95-100

• an original, eloquent, argumentative thesis statement
• an inviting introduction that establishes the significance of the topic
• a seamless overall structuring of body paragraphs that discusses thoroughly the thesis statement
• body paragraphs with strong, original topic sentences
• well-organized, insightful assertions within body paragraphs
• utterly convincing evidence properly incorporated in the body paragraphs
• sentences that progress logically without awkward or mechanical transitions
• a conclusion that goes beyond summary and repetition, shedding new light on the subject
• near-perfect grammar, usage, diction, and syntax
• an elevated, lyrical style that creates a distinct and credible voice
• a confident writing process exemplified through pre-writing strategies, solid outlines, and rough drafts

90-94

• an original, argumentative thesis statement
• an inviting introduction that leads coherently to the topic (a less inviting introduction could be the difference between a 90 and 94)
• a coherent overall structuring of body paragraphs that discusses thoroughly the thesis statement
• body paragraphs with strong topic sentences
• well-organized, original assertions within body paragraphs
• convincing evidence properly incorporated in the body paragraphs
• sentences that progress logically, though with occasional lapses into mechanical transitions
• a strong conclusion that goes beyond summary and repetition, shedding new light on the subject (a weak conclusion could be the difference between 90 and 94)
• strong grammar, usage, diction, and syntax (any breakdown in these areas could be the difference between a 90 and 94)
• an accomplished style with a pleasing sentence variety that creates a credible voice
• a strong writing process exemplified through pre-writing strategies, solid outlines, and rough drafts

85-89

• an argumentative thesis statement
• an introduction that leads coherently to the topic (weaker introductions could be the difference between an 85 and 89)
• a coherent overall structuring of body paragraphs that works toward proving the thesis statement (arguments with fewer gaps get higher marks)
• body paragraphs with coherent topic sentences
• fairly well-organized, solid assertions within body paragraphs
• mostly convincing evidence relatively well-incorporated in the body paragraphs
• sentences that progress logically for the most part
• notable lack of natural transition, with a heavy reliance on transitional adverbs to connect ideas
• an average conclusion that tends to summarize the paper, perhaps shedding new light on the subject (a weak conclusion could be the difference between 85 and 89)
• above average grammar, usage, diction, and syntax (any breakdown in these areas could be the difference between an 85 and 89)
• a clear style marked by sentence variety (i.e., not notably choppy) that creates a credible voice
• evidence of a growing writing process, with notable effort in the pre-writing, outlining, and drafting stages

80-84

• a solid thesis statement (how argumentative could be the difference between an 80 and 85)
• an introduction, though short or unwieldy, that attempts to lead to the topic (weaker introductions could be the difference between an 80 and 84)
• a mostly coherent structuring of body paragraphs that suffers occasional breakdowns in logic and connection to the thesis statement (tighter arguments get higher marks)
• body paragraphs with mostly coherent topic sentences
• body paragraphs with reasonable assertions
• mostly convincing evidence that could be more smoothly incorporated
• sentences that progress logically, but with some notable gaps
• weak transitions, but a recognizable attempt toward transition with a heavy reliance on transitional adverbs to connect ideas
• a short or unwieldy conclusion that tends to summarize the paper (a weaker conclusion could be the difference between 80 and 84)
• average to below-average grammar, usage, diction, and syntax (breakdowns in these areas could be the difference between an 80 and 84)
• an inconsistent style marked by an attempt at sentence variety, but occasional awkward, choppy spots (the critical voice is still credible)
• a decent writing process, but notable gaps in such areas as outlining and revision

75-79

• a weak thesis statement that is more descriptive than argumentative
• an introduction that is either too short or too unwieldy to lead successfully to the topic
• an attempt to structure the body paragraphs logically, but with breakdowns in overall progression
• body paragraphs with topic sentences that are either weak or unproven
• body paragraphs with a few assertions, but overall, too much summary or description
• fairly good evidence, but poorly incorporated (suggests the student has read)
• sentences do not flow logically, though an attempt at some progression is evident
• weak transition, though some attempt to connect ideas is evident
• a short conclusion that tends to summarize the paper
• below-average grammar, usage, diction, and syntax
• an inconsistent style marked by awkward, choppy spots
• mechanical problems
• a notably weak writing process with gaps in such areas as outlining and revision

70-74

• an unclear or purely descriptive thesis statement
• an aimless introduction, though some attempt to lead to thesis
• random arrangement of body paragraphs
• body paragraphs with sketchy topic sentences
• body paragraphs marked by summary or descriptions
• weak evidence, though some attempt to substantiate scattered ideas
• sentences do not flow logically, though some at progression
• weak transition, though some attempt to connect ideas
• a short, irrelevant conclusion
• below average grammar, usage, diction, and syntax
• an inconsistent style marked by awkward, choppy spots
• little attention paid to the formal concerns of the essay; numerous mechanical breakdowns
• all-around weak writing process

Failing

• indiscernible thesis statement
• failure to attempt to introduce the topic
• chaotic, randomly structured body paragraphs
• few assertions, mostly summary
• no evidence, suggesting the student has not prepared
• significant problems in grammar, usage, diction, and syntax
• numerous mechanical problems
• failure to show some progress toward composing a 5-paragraph essay
• pre-writing exercises, rough/final outlines, and rough drafts suggest little preparation or a narrow sense of a writing process