

Elements of a College-Level Research Paper

Paper Element	Professional/Very Good A–B	Average C	Poor (Not college-level) D–F	Grade for this paper	Share of total grade
Introduction	Establishes purpose and thesis clearly. Captures reader's attention. Thesis is a statement of position rather than a bare factual statement.	Less clear. Thesis is buried OR is given as a statement of fact, rather than an argument.	Little or no indication of thesis or topic.		20%
Communication/ Structure	Paper communicates purpose, tone, and topic clearly and engagingly, with little ambiguity or cliché. Discussion retains independent voice with judicious use of quotes. Paper is divided into sections dealing with different aspects of proving the thesis argument.	Paper is generally well-written but does not stick to communicating the thesis argument. Discussion is burdened with many quotes from secondary sources. Relies on some ambiguities or abstractions. Some connection to thesis statement. Some lack of clarity.	Paper poorly related to purpose. Discussion overwhelmed by quotes or recitations of source material without discussion. Unclear, ambiguous, clichéd. Poorly structured, fails to relate paper structure to supporting thesis.		25%
Analysis	Uses evidence to demonstrate thesis. Impressive depth of original insight and analysis showing strong factual understanding of subject. Well-developed process where author presents ideas followed by evidence and examples from research. Offers opposing viewpoint.	Inconsistent use of evidence to support analysis. Adequate depth. Coherent recitation of others' ideas; analysis primarily passes along opinions from secondary sources. Some issues overlooked. No opposing viewpoint presented. Factual errors skew analysis.	Poor use of evidence to support analysis. Little or no depth or insight. Lack of understanding of material read No analysis provided beyond quotes from sources, if any.		25%
Referencing	Variety of well-researched, quality sources. Good mix of primary and secondary sources. No non-reviewed internet or tertiary sources.	Reliance on non-academic or questionable sources.	Poor or inappropriate choice of sources.		20%
Conclusion	Effectively closes the paper, tying together all arguments and reinforcing thesis.	Adequate integration and conclusion.	Weak or no conclusion.		10%

Subtotal

Credits

Draft	Submitted on time	+5
Deductions		
Proposal	Late or not submitted	-5
Referencing	Some citations missing (e.g., only cites direct quotes)	-10
	All citations missing	-25
	Too few sources	-10
	No bibliography	-15
Plagiarized		-100
Too short		-10
Submitted late	1 class	-10
	2 classes	-20
	3+ classes	-30
Format	No cover page	-2½
	No page numbers	-2½

Credits/Debits

TOTAL GRADE