

Center for Teaching and Learning
Argument Essay Rubrics

Point Value	Grade	Characteristics
125-112	A	<p>The paper surpasses requirements of the assignment. The student presents a clear, provocative thesis in a focused essay, supported with specific and appropriate evidence. Outside sources of information are used carefully and cited appropriately. The essay demonstrates good judgment and an awareness of the topic's complexities.</p> <p>The organization is appropriate. The introduction establishes a context, purpose, and audience for writing and contains a focused thesis statement. Subsequent paragraphs are focused around explicit or implicit topic sentences. Paragraphs progress logically towards a conclusion that moves beyond a mere restatement, offering the topic's implications or significance.</p> <p>The prose is clear and readable; the language, precise and effective, There are few errors in grammar or usage, and none undermine the effectiveness of the paper. The essay may show creativity in presentation.</p>
111-100	B	<p>The paper fulfills all requirements of the assignment. The topic is fairly well defined, focused and supported; the thesis statement is more than adequate (but still could be sharpened); and the reasoning and support are thorough. The writer demonstrates awareness of complexity and other points of view.</p> <p>The essay has an effective introduction and conclusion. The order of information is logical, with well-chosen transitions and explicit or implicit topic sentences. Paragraph divisions are logical, and the paragraphs use enough specific detail to satisfy the reader.</p> <p>The prose is clear and readable. Sentence structure is appropriate and includes some complexity, varied sentences, and modifiers. Few grammar, usage, or punctuation errors appear, and vocabulary is precise and appropriate.</p>
99-88	C	<p>The paper attempts to follow the assignment but the essay fails because of flaws in design and/or execution. The topic is defined only generally; the thesis statement is merely adequate (it may be too broad); and the supporting evidence is often obvious and easily accessible. The writer demonstrates little awareness of the topic's complexity or other points of view, leaving the paper with inconsistencies in development, organization and reasoning.</p> <p>The organization is fairly clear. Despite the occasionally lack of topic sentence, the reader could outline an argument. Paragraphs have adequate development and are divided appropriately. Transitions are present, but they are mechanical.</p>

		<p>The expression is competent. Sentence structure relies on simple and compound sentences. Word choice is correct, but limited. Errors in spelling, usage and/or punctuation do not affect audience understanding. The paper may contain wordy structures, inflated language and clichés.</p>
87-75	D	<p>The paper attempts to follow the assignment but demonstrates little awareness of purpose, audience or context. The paper may be too short.</p> <p>The essay has a fundamentally flawed thesis statement or none at all. Obvious evidence may be missing and irrelevant evidence present. Interpretation of any evidence may be inadequate, may miss the essay's purpose or may simply be lacking.</p> <p>Organization is deficient in one or two of the following areas: the introduction and conclusion are underdeveloped or missing altogether; paragraphs are neither coherently developed nor arranged; topic sentences are missing, unclear, or inappropriate; or transitions are missing or flawed.</p> <p>The essay may have numerous and consistent errors in spelling, usage, and punctuation that all reveal unfamiliarity with the conventions of academic writing or a lack of careful proofreading.</p>
Below 74	F	<p>The F paper fails to fulfill the assignment.</p> <p>It has no clear purpose or direction or sense of audience. It falls seriously short of the length requirement.</p> <p>The paper is insufficiently developed and does not go beyond the obvious.</p> <p>Outside sources have not been cited.</p> <p>Errors of grammar, usage, and punctuation abound and seriously impede comprehension.</p>