

Self-Assessment

Here are the criteria your instructor will use to evaluate your essay. Evaluate your draft of the essay, considering its strengths and weaknesses, and decide what you should do to revise it for submission.

Grading Guide

1–5 scale: 5 is Superior

Correctness	A check in the margin indicates some kind of error in grammar, usage, or punctuation in that line. Brackets surrounding a word, phrase, or sentence indicate that you need to take a second look at the bracketed item: it may be awkward, wordy, clumsy, inaccurate, or otherwise inappropriate. Extensive errors can detract from the overall effectiveness of the essay. Make sure that you revise and proofread carefully.
Beginning and Ending	The beginning of your essay should get the reader’s attention, clearly connect the claim you make introducing your essay to the task assigned, and set up expectations for the reader about the content and structure of the essay. After reading your introduction, the reader should have a good idea of how the essay is going to meet the two objectives of the assignment, in both its form and its content. Near the end of your introduction, the reader should be able to identify a statement that answers directly the question posed by the assignment. The ending should provide a sense of closure and should follow from the expectations you have set up for your reader from the beginning.
Focus and Organization	Your essay needs to have purposeful form. It needs organization that follows the expectation you set up for your readers in the introduction. Try outlining or mapping your essay to discover how well your essay is organized. Try reorganizing the sections of your essay to see what difference this makes. Every part of the essay should “belong.” It should relate to what comes before and after, and it should be tied to the central idea, the beginning, and the end.
Coherence of Paragraphs	The sentences in each paragraph or “chunk” of the essay must have a clear relationship to each other. Check the order of ideas in each paragraph by outlining the sentences. Identify the “top” or most general sentence in the paragraph, and then identify the relationship of other sentences to this top sentence. Revise sentences so that the beginning of each sentence follows naturally from what went before.
Development and Detail	Avoid unsubstantiated claims about theory. When you make a claim, provide examples that illustrate your point. Don’t quote at length, however. Assume that your reader is familiar with the source and simply refer to, summarize, or paraphrase passages from the source that illustrate your claim. Quote sparingly. Don’t just repeat what the author said; instead, summarize, paraphrase, or quote the essay in order to illustrate a claim you are making. Explain how the example illustrates your point.
Sentence Structure and Word Choice	Work to make your sentences understandable and graceful. Eliminate wordiness. Generally choose active verbs over passive or “to be” verbs. As a “rule of thumb,” put “old” information before new information in the sentence. Put your most important ideas near the beginning or end of the sentence. Strive for just the right word. Choose words that are accurate, precise, and appropriate. Make sure you understand the denotation and connotation of each word you use.