

Evaluation Checklists

Some instructors find evaluation checklists a useful tool in evaluating student essays. For many instructors, a checklist that segments the paper into its component parts allows consistency and efficiency in grading; the overall evaluation of the paper is the sum of the evaluation of each of its parts. Furthermore, checklists can ensure that students are informed about the evaluation process, so that they may more effectively write and revise their papers. Checklists may also be useful for student-instructor debriefing on an assignment because they help establish mutual understanding between student and teacher.

Checklists may take a number of forms, from a list assigning values to the components of a paper, to one that just lists components, allowing space for instructor comments. Whatever checklist is used should emanate from the assignment given, and it should be distributed to students when the assignment is distributed, so that they may use it as a tool to help guide their writing processes.

Many instructors do not like checklists, preferring instead to grade holistically, evaluating the success of the paper as a whole. Some evaluators find that the values they assign to each part do not *add up* to what they believe the overall evaluation of the paper should be.

Consider these pros and cons along with your natural grading preferences as you decide what grading approach to use. Whatever approach you adopt will work well if you believe in it, if the grading criteria are driven by the course, if they are arrived at when the assignment is designed, and if they are communicated to the students at the time they receive the assignment.

Sample Checklist

This checklist is useful both for students and for instructors. Students may use it as they write their papers; instructors may use it to evaluate papers.

Content

The paper

- addresses the topic or question.
- is factually accurate.
- accurately presents assigned author's or authors' viewpoint(s).
- provides sufficient textual evidence to support your argument.

Structure

- The introduction
 - is present in the paper.
 - includes a clearly stated thesis.
 - indicates how the paper is organized.
- The body
 - contains a complete discussion and support.
- Each paragraph
 - includes a topic sentence.
 - develops one main idea.
 - has a transition sentence linking it to the next paragraph.
- The conclusion
 - recaps the thesis statement and the essay's main points.
 - presents a closing statement of the writer's position.

Organization and Development

- The entire composition
 - is logically organized.
 - has a solid argument with supporting evidence.
- Main points
 - are relevant to the thesis statement.
 - are discussed without repetition.
 - are easy to locate.

Style

- The writing
 - is concise and precise.
 - is free of misspellings.
 - is free of grammatical mistakes:
 - lacks incomplete sentences
 - employs appropriate punctuation
 - includes subject/verb agreement
 - uses pronouns correctly
 - is free of sexist language
 - is free of jargon and clichés
 - cites references correctly.