

Level	Argument	Logic and Coherence	Evidence	Artistry	Rules
4 Distinguished	The essay presents a noteworthy thesis – i.e., an arguable position that might not have occurred (as stated) even to an intelligent and informed reader.	Each paragraph has a clear topic sentence; transitions between paragraphs and sentences are uniformly smooth and logical; the essay’s development is purposive from start to finish.	The quantity of evidence supporting the thesis is adequate yet not excessive; the quality is superb; evidence has been selected judiciously, presented smoothly, and handled with subtlety; counterarguments have been considered and appropriately answered.	There is a high degree of care and imagination in the selection of words, the construction of sentences, and the order and pacing of the whole essay. The essay displays qualities such as wit, grace, lucidity, and succinctness. Tone is appropriate to audience and subject-matter.	The essay’s adherence to rules of grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, and documentation is perfect or near-perfect.
3 Competent	The essay presents a thesis – i.e., a position with which an intelligent and informed reader might reasonably disagree.	Most paragraphs have a clear topic sentence; transitions between paragraphs and sentences are almost all smooth and logical; the essay’s development is generally purposive.	There is not quite enough or a bit too much evidence presented; evidence has been selected, presented, and handled well; most counterarguments have been considered and appropriately answered.	There is considerable care and imagination in the selection of words, the construction of sentences, and the order and pacing of the whole essay. There is occasional wit or grace. Language is mainly lucid and succinct, with perhaps occasional wordiness. Tone is mainly appropriate to audience and subject-matter.	The essay’s adherence to rules of grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, and documentation is consistent despite occasional lapses.
2 Acceptable (Significant improvement needed to reach Level 3)	The essay announces a topic but does not present a thesis.	A significant number of paragraphs lack a clear topic sentence or lack smooth and logical transitions between sentences or with surrounding paragraphs; the sense of purpose in the essay’s development may be lost at times.	There is a damaging lack of evidence in places or overall; some evidence is inappropriate, awkwardly presented, or mishandled; counterarguments have not been answered well.	There is occasional care and imagination in the selection of words and the construction of sentences; there is some attempt to make the order and pacing of the whole effective; there may be frequent problems with tone; there may be a distracting amount of wordiness.	The essay’s adherence to rules of grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, and documentation is inconsistent.
1 Substandard	The essay neither announces a topic nor presents a thesis.	Many paragraphs lack a clear topic sentence; transitions between paragraphs and sentences are frequently hard to follow; the essay’s development lacks a clear sense of purpose.	Evidence is very inadequate in quantity and quality; selection, presentation, and handling are poor; obvious counterarguments have been left unanswered.	There is little or no artistry in the handling of words, sentences, or the essay as a whole; tone is inappropriate; wordiness is rampant.	The essay’s adherence to rules of grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, and documentation is poor.
Rating	4	3	3	2	2