

Dave's Checklist for Papers

Introductory paragraph:

- ☐ Do you have an introductory paragraph?
- ☐ Did you describe the question or issue that you will be discussing? Did you discuss the possible stances on this question or issue?
- ☐ Did you mention your thesis? Have you written what are you going to accomplish and what are you going to argue in this paper?
- ☐ Optional: Did you define key concepts, if necessary?

Body of the paper:

- ☐ Do you have an argument for your position? Is it fair to your opponent? Is your argument/position clear and consistent?
- ☐ Have you considered objections (if required)? Have you answered or tried to answer every objection you raised? If you are objecting to a philosopher as part of your argument, have you replied on that person's behalf and dealt with that?
- ☐ Do you exhibit a strong understanding both of your position, the philosopher's or author's position, and/or of your opponent's position?
- ☐ Have you answered the question being asked, only bringing into the paper relevant information from the reading and/or the lecture? Have you focused your mind and your paper on the question?

Conclusion:

- ☐ Have you reviewed your main point or argument and your opponent's point?
- ☐ Have you summed up what you have shown or have not shown?

Whole paper:

- ☐ Have you checked for grammar? Correct: "If I exist, *then* I exist." Incorrect: "If I exist, *than* I exist." ("*than*" is comparative: "I like this better *than* that.") Affect v. effect: "How will this *affect* me?" "What will be the *effect* of this punishment?" its v. it's ("its" = possessive: "The cup wasn't in *its* spot." "it's" = it is: "*It's* raining." Correct: "argument," Incorrect: "arguement." When concluding, it's "therefore," not "therefor." Correct: "Socrates' death" and "Descartes' argument." Incorrect: "Socrates death" and "Descartes argument."
- ☐ Have you used question marks at the end of questions?
- ☐ Have you spelled the philosopher's/author's name correctly? Check your book or another good source to be sure.
- ☐ Have you given references to every single place where you write sentences such as, "Descartes says . . ." or "Descartes thinks . . ." or "Descartes argues . . .," and for every source you used in creating the paper (e.g., other philosophy texts, encyclopedias, websites, etc.)?
- ☐ Is the paper too short? If so, can you say something more about the subject, consider another objection, etc.? Is the paper too long? If so, is there anything that could be taken out, for example, a weak objection and reply among three other strong objections?