

Standards for grades: In order, from most necessary to nice to have, I care about these points. You can use them for a checklist:

Necessary for a C

- * That you have a thesis, or at least a clear, *specific* topic
- * That most of your paper is relevant to your thesis
- * That you use some combination of sources and reasoning, and have a “works cited” page
- * That you avoid any suspicion of deliberate plagiarism
- That the text of the paper is *at least* 10 full pages long (11 including works cited), pt. 12 in a normal font, **with page numbers**

Necessary for a B- to B

- * That you give me a paper with a clear thesis, reasonably well argued, with a clear beginning, middle and end
- * That you have the minimum number of sources required – at least 5 (two scholarly books; three articles from peer-reviewed scholarly journals): I’ll tell you if you need more
- * That each source is properly referenced, whether quoted or paraphrased
- * That the MLA (or APA) formatting of each of the paper is basically correct
- * That your “Works Cited” page is clear and basically correct in form
- That most of your paragraphs clearly present one relevant idea
- That the paper averages less than one obvious grammatical error, spelling error, run-on or incomplete sentence per page

Necessary for a B+

- * That you show me your thesis is interesting and present it convincingly
- * That the structure of the paper presents your argument *smoothly and logically*, with clear transitions between sections, using an intelligent combination of sources and your own logic
- * That you have the right number of *appropriate* sources for your particular paper
- * That I can *easily* tell the difference between the views of your sources and your own views and/or reasoning
- That every paragraph & nearly every sentence is clear, with clear transitions between paragraphs
- That the paper is basically free from grammatical errors, spelling errors, run-on or incomplete sentences, and has minimal problems with punctuation or MLA/APA formatting in citation and in your works cited
- That the text of the paper is *at least* 11 full pages long (12 including works cited)

Necessary for an A-

- * That every sentence is necessary and clear in meaning, and all paragraphs are in logical order
- That the “Works Cited” page is in flawless MLA or APA form
- That your paper has no more than three or four obvious grammatical errors etc.

Necessary for an A or A+ (& likely to increase a grade from B to B+, B+ to A-, or A- to A)

- * That you basically avoid awkward language and poor word choices (I will be a little easier on non-native English speakers here).
- That you write eloquently and beautifully
- That you teach the reader something new and valuable.

The ***starred*** points are **absolutely necessary** to receive the grades mentioned; on the other points, I will be flexible.

For example, a “B+” paper that is 2 pages too short will get a B, not a C+; and an “A” paper with five or six small errors in spelling or MLA issues such as capitalization of titles (but not twenty!) will still get an A *if* it is excellent in all other respects.

On the other hand, an “A” paper with any hint of plagiarism will get a “C,” but only if I am convinced that the lack of proper citation was an accident

– **It will receive an “F” if I have any reason to think that the plagiarism was deliberate.**