

Standards for Research Essay and Outline (Steven Engler)

Elements	Excellent Work	Average to Good Work	Failing to Marginal Work
Initial Outline/Bibliography			
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic is relevant and clearly framed • Initial statement of thesis is clear • Support for thesis clear (or steps of illustration, exploration, stages of presentation, phases of development) • How you will use different sources clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic relevant but vaguely conceived • Thesis too broad • Gaps in outline (leaving details of how you will develop an aspect of the argument, case, or illustration unclear) • Good support, but for a different thesis than the one given 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrelevant topic • Topic given but no thesis (i.e., no main point <i>about</i> that topic) • Simply lists points about the topic without giving a sense of how they fit together to support a main point • Sources left hanging with no sense of use
Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources covering each of the areas that are necessary to support the thesis & explore the topic • Recent sources; Range of types of sources • Consistent clear citation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sources for certain areas that will need to be covered • Older, less academic sources • Improper or inconsistent citation format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very sketchy, limited, old, irrelevant, or narrow set of sources • Incomplete citations (not enough information to lead right to the actual book, article, or website)
Exploring Your Topic/Making Your Case			
Thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and concise statement of main point of essay (point to be proven, illustrated, explored, developed) • Significance and relevance of thesis statement clear (it's a point worth making about this topic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to identify which sentence is the thesis • Unclear, fuzzy, too wordy, too vague, too general, or too simplistic (i.e., such an obvious point that anyone would grant it, meaning there's no need to write an essay about it) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear statement of main point (i.e., just a general point stating the topic or some aspect of it) • Main claim is buried, confused, unclear; thesis framed as a question
Thesis Support, Illustration, or Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence/development /illustration of thesis is set out in clear, well-ordered sequence of points, organized in effective paragraphs • Well-balanced (good proportion of space on each section, example, main point, etc.) • No gaps; Stays on track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of some points, examples, or discussions not explicit • Too much time spent on some points and not enough on others • Occasionally wanders, goes off on tangents, skips or repeats points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads like a list of unconnected points not a like case being built for the essay's main point • Writer's opinions given without support • Major gaps, tangents, repetition, lack of clarity
Essay Structure/Mechanics of Writing			
Introductory Paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out a basic sketch of the topic area in a way that makes the meaning and significance of the thesis clear • Clear thesis statement (usually last sentence of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries to cram in too many details (summarizing the whole essay) without giving a good picture of the context for your thesis • Unclear thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just launches into topic without setting up and giving the essay's main point • Points too general to help make the meaning and significance of the (missing) thesis clear

	first paragraph)		
Paragraph Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first sentence of each paragraph states the one main point of that paragraph in a manner that makes its relation & contribution to the thesis obvious Each paragraph makes a clear, discrete point Order of paragraphs develops your points in clear sections and logical sequence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear topic sentences Some paragraphs deal with too many points & should be split; Reordering paragraphs would make the progression of points (& thesis support) clearer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No topic sentences Progression of ideas by paragraph unclear Order of paragraphs doesn't develop support for thesis
Sentence Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences are clear & complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes hard to follow points due to unclear sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run-on sentences & sentence frag's make points hard to follow
Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms & concepts are used correctly Terms not used just for effect Terms defined when necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The appropriate vocabulary of the issue(s) is missing Use of unclear jargon gets in way of clarity of points Terms not clarified well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms used wrongly Jargon used instead of clear points Terms used without clarifying/defining their meaning
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restates thesis and summarizes support Leaves reader with a sense of the meaning, significance, and viability of the thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simply lists points without giving a sense of their relation to the thesis & context Introduces new points or gives too much detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No conclusion; no sense of the thesis and main supporting points Just gives writer's opinions
Research/Using Your Sources			
Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sources are used to develop the topic and support the thesis (relevant points, theoretical views, effective examples, useful cases, a range of viewpoints, statements by experts that support, not make, your points, etc.) Appropriate range of types of sources for the topic Recent sources are used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over-reliance on one or two sources Inconsistency: using sources for some main points not others Important voices, books, views, perspectives are missing One-sided (not using sources covering various sides of the issues) Uses quotes to make rather than support points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't use specific sources to make specific points Misinterprets or misrepresents what the sources are saying No sources used for some major point(s) Too many quotes doing the work of explaining, developing points Just rephrases sources instead of placing them in the context provided by the thesis
Citation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sources are clearly cited whenever information beyond common knowledge is drawn upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sources of some main bits of information are not cited Trivial citations are common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no acknowledgment of sources Improper, inconsistent, or incomplete citations