

ESSAY 02 • SELF-EDIT CHECKLIST

COMPARE

- focuses on comparison, occasionally concedes differences

ORGANIZATION – answers “so what?”

Introduction

- two or three brief, clear and specific sentences

NO vague generalities!

- final sentence of intro has a thesis statement that shows importance of argument

NOT *telling* how important the topic is (closed question, value judgment: “very”),

Instead DO *show* how the topic is important (open question, explanation)

NOT description “we will discuss these texts,” “some are similar, some are different”

Instead DO answer/solve the how/why question (“because”)

Body

- two or three paragraphs of a few brief, clear and specific sentences

- each paragraph has ONE point (sub-thesis) that supports the main argument (thesis)

- organization by TOPIC (sub-thesis), not by author/text

REFERENCES—answers “says who?”

- around 6-8 citations, very few *short* quotations

NO long block quotes

- citations drawn from a range of sources

NOT just one or two adjacent lines

LENGTH

- meets word limit (750 +/-20)

NB citations in parentheses should not count toward total

Peer Editor:

Paper Writer:

Please respond honestly and respectfully, and focus on helping the writer to improve this paper and future papers. Give the kind of feedback you would want. When you make an evaluation (“this is good; this needs work”), always explain your reasons, give specific examples, and make suggestions. Feel free to make marginal comments on the paper itself, which helps to indicate where your comments apply (and helps if you run out of room here). You need not be redundant.

What is your overall impression of the paper? What are its **main strengths**?

Thesis:

Paraphrase the paper’s **main point** here.

Is the introductory paragraph **clear, brief, and specific**?

Does the introduction answer who, what, when, where? Otherwise are these questions answered sufficiently in the body?

Label the **thesis statement** in the first paragraph. Is it easy to find? Does it capture the paper’s main point?

Is the thesis sufficiently **focused**? If not, how would you alter its scope?

Is the thesis sufficiently objective? Does it adequately **account for opposing arguments**? If not, what counter-arguments should it address?

Do you find the thesis convincing? Can it be **supported by primary sources**, or is it unsupported (e.g. value judgment)? Does it pass the “says who” test?

Do you find the thesis **interesting**? Does it pass the “so what” and “who cares” tests?

Structure:

Does each body paragraph have a **topic** sentence that makes a claim which the paragraph then proves?

Read the **thesis**, followed by each **topic** sentence. Do the claims collectively pass the “so what” and “who cares” tests? Do they form a coherent argument? Should they be reorganized? If so, how?

Can you easily determine how the **topic** sentences relate to each other (e.g. through clear transitions) and to the thesis? Does each paragraph build on the previous paragraph?

Is the textual **evidence** in each paragraph sufficient, necessary, and well-explained?

Is there a really good sentence buried somewhere that should be promoted to a **topic** sentence, or even to a thesis statement?

Does the conclusion answer a “so what” question? Note that the conclusion should not introduce new arguments.

Style:

What could be cut from this paper? Look for digressions, **summary of the text**, and wordiness.

What points in the essay are **clearly written**? Indicate any confusing points and suggest clarifications.

Did the writer proofread? Can you find grammar, spelling, punctuation, style, or citation format mistakes? If so, mark them on the paper itself.

Circle every form of the verb “to be” (“am,” “are,” “is,” “was,” “were,” “being”)? Offer suggestions as to how ~~the passive/stative might be avoided~~ they might **avoid the passive/stative**.

Final Comments:

List the three most important things the writer can do to improve this paper:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If you can, formulate the “so what” question which seems most important to you as a response to the argument of this paper. In other words, if this paper were the beginning of a larger investigation, where do you think it could or should lead? What are the most interesting implications of the paper’s argument?