

Grading Paragraphs



Levels 1-6

If a child desires to get an “A,” he should know just how to do so! Share your grading criteria with your student before grading his work!

You may wish to make prewriting, neatness, punctuality, and proper formatting into bases for grades as well. If so, add them to your self-checking forms.

We have created a rubric that you may print and hand to your student, checking off the boxes in front of criteria that you will be using when you determine his grades.

Grading Level 1 Paragraphs

With Level 1 students, you may be dealing with a child who is not yet reading fluently. Additionally, he may or may not have the stamina to do enough handwriting at one sitting to produce paragraphs. Our recommendation for children at this learning level is that you teach them about topic sentences, bodies, and conclusions and then help them compose initial paragraphs using their Word Banks.

Another strategy is for the child to dictate to you both his prewriting and his paragraph, so that you play scribe to his thoughts. If you approach the matter this way, have him dictate punctuation to you as well. Tell him that he must direct you to capitalize and punctuate. Then, let him see every word you print, and do not capitalize or punctuate without direction from him. Towards the end of the year, your Level 1 student may be capable of composing written paragraphs. Again, much depends on the physical development of your child. Do not push! There are many school years ahead in which your child can learn this vital writing skill.

We would not recommend grading these students. You can train them to do some self-checking for things like capital letters and periods, etc., if you wish.

Grading Level 2-6 Paragraphs

If the student at any of these levels is physically capable of writing paragraphs, focus your teaching time on helping him to do self-evaluations. Before he hands in his draft, create a proofing sheet (just a checklist) of those skills to which he can be held accountable. These might include:

- * Hand in completed prewriting with the draft. (Teacher may grade this along with the draft.)
- * Capitalize the first word of every sentence.
- * Punctuate each sentence correctly at the end.
- * Indent your paragraph.
- * Start the paragraph with a topic sentence.
- * All body sentences should relate to the topic sentence.
- * The paragraph has a conclusion—a sense of ending.

Again, grades for these levels are usually not necessary. However, you can probably give letter grades for students in the upper end of this range by using the following criteria, if you so desire. (We are assuming that grades will be for their self-checked drafts, not for editions made after your suggestions.) However, be sure to have your student revise his draft in light of your edits, creating a finished product suitable for display at his Unit Celebration.

- * “A” drafts will have all of the above elements correct and be handed in on time.
 - If you decide to require your student to hand in prewriting, make it part of the grade. Is it thorough? Did the student include the important elements from it?
 - There may be a few spelling errors.
 - There may be some awkward syntax or some word choices that can be improved. Still, the draft is carefully done and looks neat.
 - The draft is presented in whatever format you have given the student beforehand (in terms of heading, date, and margins).
- * “B” drafts will have most essential elements correct but will be missing one major element.
 - If you’re requiring prewriting, gauge the student’s performance on this underlying part of the assignment. The paragraph itself may be excellent, but if you’ve required prewriting and the student has barely complied, mark him down!
 - If the paragraph has a weak topic sentence, but the body and conclusion are in place, or if the topic sentence and conclusion are good but a body sentence is off point, a “B” is called for.
 - If the mechanics are below the standard that you can reasonably expect, given the student’s skill set, a “B” is called for.



There are various point-to-grade schemes. Here's the one that we recommend:
A+ 100-98 pts.
A 97-94 pts.
A- 93-90 pts.
B+ 89-88 pts.
B 87-84 pts.
B- 83-80 pts.
C+ 79-78 pts.
C 77-74 pts.
C- 73-70 pts.
D+ 69-68 pts.
D 67-64 pts.
D- 63-60 pts.
F below 60 pts.

- ☐ The draft might also have some defects in format or be messy in appearance. Count off for these. One needs to grade papers for correct presentation as well as content during these years.
- ☐ You can add lateness without a reasonable excuse to these downgrade criteria, as well.
- * "C" drafts will have some real issues with the paragraph or the process.
 - ☐ If the prewriting is faulty and this affects the paragraph, mark the student down to a "C."
 - ☐ The draft is missing two of the three major paragraph components listed on page 1.
 - ☐ There is real negligence in spelling or punctuation, according to the student's level of mastery. Consistently mark a draft down one letter grade for this problem.
 - ☐ If the draft is late or messy but otherwise would receive a "B" or even an "A," grade it down to this level. Students must learn the value of careful work done in a timely fashion!
- * "D" work is seriously flawed, for any number of reasons.
 - ☐ The draft is missing two of three major paragraph elements.
 - ☐ There are mistakes in virtually every sentence.
 - ☐ The student's work is sloppy, or he has not carefully adhered to the required format. He may like fancy fonts or colored words, but these will not be acceptable later. They constitute a crutch that will cripple, not strengthen, his efforts. Do not allow the student to use formats that you have not directed him to use. Grade him down persistently on this aspect!
 - ☐ You can add lateness without a reasonable excuse to these downgrade criteria, as well.
- * "F" work is failing for one or more of the following reasons.
 - ☐ The student failed to turn in an assignment on time, without a reasonable excuse. His tardiness has earned a failing grade.
 - ☐ The work is woefully inadequate in several major areas. (We recommend a failing grade in this area only for willful disobedience in terms of paragraph structure.)
 - ☐ The student has given no attention to grammar, spelling, or punctuation at his skill level.
 - ☐ The draft is sloppy or defies acceptable formats.

Using the Rubric

When using the grading rubric, we suggest that you begin by explaining it to your student and either checking or highlighting the criteria you will require. (Remember, different levels will use different amounts of this chart. You can retype it for very young students if you wish.) Instruct students to hand in assignments with this form on top, followed by prewriting, then completed self-checking forms, then the draft.

To reach a grade, work down the chart, checking off elements as they appear on your student's draft.

- * You will subtract points for every check mark that does not fall in the "Excellent" column. Below is a chart that shows you how many points to subtract for each checked bullet point in a particular box. We are calling these "lost points."

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Structure	-5 per bullet	-4 per bullet	-3 per bullet	-0 per bullet
Content	-5 per bullet	-4 per bullet	-3 per bullet	-0 per bullet
Mechanics	-5 per bullet	-4 per bullet	-2 per bullet	-0 per bullet
Presentation	-5 per bullet	-4 per bullet	-2 per bullet	-0 per bullet

- * Add the total number of lost points and write the sum in the space at the bottom of the page. To obtain the final grade for the paper, subtract the total lost points from 200 and divide by 2.
- * Remember that grading is somewhat subjective. This rubric is meant merely to be a tool to help you evaluate your student's work, so please adjust it if you need to.

If you alter the number of bullets checked in any row, the lost point system will not work correctly, but you may still reach a grade based on the descriptions under "Grading Level 2-6 Paragraphs."

Paragraphs



Name _____ Date ____/____/____ Grade: _____

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Structure <small>(Only check 4 total bul- lets in this row.)</small> Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic sentence is not placed first. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph body has many sentence(s) not on topic. <input type="checkbox"/> Body is very weak & much too short. <input type="checkbox"/> No paragraph conclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic sentence is not placed first. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph body has several sentence(s) not on topic. <input type="checkbox"/> Body is weak & clearly too short. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak paragraph conclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic sentence is not placed first. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph body has 1 or 2 sentence(s) not on topic. <input type="checkbox"/> Body is mostly complete, but a little too short. <input type="checkbox"/> Good, basic paragraph conclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic sentence is placed first. <input type="checkbox"/> All body sentences are on topic. <input type="checkbox"/> Body is complete with a sufficient number of sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent paragraph conclusion.
Content <small>(Only check 4 total bul- lets in this row.)</small> Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor or no topic sentence. <input type="checkbox"/> Much or all information is inadequate & inaccurate. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences contain many misused or ill-chosen words. <input type="checkbox"/> Student did not follow the assignment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Weak topic sentence. <input type="checkbox"/> Much information is inadequate; some is inaccurate. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences contain some misused or ill-chosen words. <input type="checkbox"/> Student did not follow the assignment well.	<input type="checkbox"/> Good, basic topic sentence. <input type="checkbox"/> Good information, but could be more complete & accurate. <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly good word choice, but an occasional misused or ill-chosen word. <input type="checkbox"/> Student varied assignment slightly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent topic sentence. <input type="checkbox"/> Information is complete & accurate. <input type="checkbox"/> Good, concrete words are chosen throughout. <input type="checkbox"/> Student executed the assignment exactly as directed.
Mechanics <small>(Only check 3 total bul- lets in this row.)</small> Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph has many spelling errors. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph has many errors of punctuation. <input type="checkbox"/> Student did not self proof.	<input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph has several spelling errors. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph has several errors of punctuation. <input type="checkbox"/> Self-proofing requirements were not adequately met.	<input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph has one or two spelling errors. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph has some errors of punctuation. <input type="checkbox"/> Student's proofing chart not submitted or not thoroughly completed.	<input type="checkbox"/> No spelling errors. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph is almost perfect with regard to punctuation rules. <input type="checkbox"/> Self-proofing chart is completed & paragraph reflects student's careful self-checking.
Presentation & Punctuality <small>(Only check 4 total bul- lets in this row.)</small> Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Student did not hand in any pre-writing. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft is sloppy. <input type="checkbox"/> Student has ignored teacher's formatting directions. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft was very late without adequate excuse, or the student did not hand it in at all.	<input type="checkbox"/> Student's prewriting was inadequate for the assignment. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft is not acceptably neat. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft uses significant unauthorized formats. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft was late without adequate excuse.	<input type="checkbox"/> Student's prewriting shows weaknesses that affect this paragraph. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft is not as neat as it could be. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft uses unauthorized formats. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft was slightly late without adequate excuse.	<input type="checkbox"/> Student's prewriting was complete and thorough. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft is neat. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft is correctly formatted according to teacher's directions. <input type="checkbox"/> Draft was handed in on time.

_____ Total lost points

To obtain final grade, subtract total lost points from 200 and divide by 2.