

Grading Written Papers and Reports for Home Schooling Parents Contributed by Abby Hines

Grading a written assignment, such as a book report or research paper, requires that the parent evaluate for 2 broad categories of performance: 1) grammar, and 2) content / organization. If the parent has a good understanding of English grammar, evaluating this area is fairly objective and easily done. However, grading for content / organization can be highly subjective, thus quite daunting for many home school parents. We are often torn between not wanting to grade too harshly, and not wanting to be too lenient; this balance is something that takes time and practice to develop.

When I first started home schooling, I had no idea how to approach this, so I did what I always do- I ask someone who has a very good idea of what they are doing! I offer this method, which was shared with me by a friend, who is also a twelfth grade English teacher; it makes the task much more manageable for me.

Procedure

When I assign a paper, I give the requirements, which include the things that I expect to see discussed content-wise. I also attach a form similar to the one below, outlining exactly what I expect to see, structurally. Each element of the paper has certain points or percentages assigned to it.

When the paper is completed and turned in, I begin by reading the paper through, just looking for grammatical integrity. I look for capitalization, punctuation, spelling, word usage, subject / verb / number agreement, etc. I try to keep in mind what we have covered in grammar lessons and hold the student accountable for those things, which they have covered. For each error, I deduct one point from a possible 100. If it is a very long paper, such as a research report, I might adjust the number of points I take off for each error. The paper receives one grade for this area. Then, I grade according to the following model for the content / organization and the paper receives another grade for this area. When I finish, I average the two grades, and that gives the paper its overall grade.

Grading for Content / Organization

Requirements

The requirements will depend on what type of paper your student is writing. For a book report, you might require an introductory paragraph, 3 or more supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion. However, for a more extended report, you might require an introductory *section*, several supporting *sections*, and a summary *section*. Each section should follow the paragraph structure outlined above.

Assigning Possible Points

The possible point values for each paragraph will be determined by how many paragraphs you are requiring. For a short paper, like a book report, divide 100 by the number of paragraphs your student must write. Thus, in a 5-paragraph paper, each paragraph will be worth a possible 20 points. If, however, you are assigning a longer paper, like a research report, you may want to weight the introductory and summary paragraphs or sections more heavily. In this case, rather than assigning point values to each paragraph, you might assign a % value to the introduction and the conclusion, and divide the % value left over by the number of supporting paragraphs the paper contains.

The possible point value for each element of the paragraph is determined by how many details, examples or reasons the paragraph contains. Divide the point value for the total paragraph by the number of details, examples or reasons, + 2, for the introductory and conclusion sentences. (For Ex: in a paragraph that is worth 20 points, and has an introductory sentence, 3 supporting elements, and a summary sentence, each of these elements would be worth 5 points.)

Assigning a Content / Organizational Grade

The number of points the student actually earns is determined not only by the presence of the required element, but also how well the student met the stated criteria. For example, if the paragraph contains details that don't support the topic sentence, then points may be partially or totally lost depending on how severe the error is. Another example would be the case of a supporting paragraph that has a topic sentence that does not support the topic sentence of the introductory paragraph (which should contain the theme of the paper). This is a fairly serious problem, since such an error may cause the entire paper to lack clarity and unity. (If you are helping your student by reviewing rough drafts, huge errors will be caught before the final paper is turned in.)

Content / Organizational Grading Criteria

Requirements:	Point
Value:	
I. Introductory Paragraph	
-Topic Sentence- This sentence should <u>set the theme for the paper.</u>	_____
-At least 3 details, examples, or reasons that support the topic sentence	_____ea.
-Summary or conclusion sentence that ties up this paragraph	_____
	¶ Total _____
II. Supporting Paragraphs (The body)	
-Topic Sentence- The topic sentence of each supporting paragraph <u>must support the theme of the introductory paragraph.</u>	_____
-At least 3 details that support the topic sentence of this paragraph	_____ea.
-Summary or conclusion sentence that ties up the paragraph	_____
	¶ Total _____
III. Supporting Paragraphs (The body)	
-Topic Sentence- The topic sentence of each supporting paragraph <u>must support the theme of the introductory paragraph.</u>	_____
-At least 3 details that support the topic sentence of this paragraph	_____ea.
-Summary or conclusion sentence that ties up the paragraph	_____
	¶ Total _____
IV. Supporting Paragraphs (The body)	
-Topic Sentence- The topic sentence of each supporting paragraph <u>must support the theme of the introductory paragraph.</u>	_____
-At least 3 details that support the topic sentence of this paragraph	_____ea.
-Summary or conclusion sentence that ties up the paragraph	_____
	¶ Total _____
V. Conclusion or Summary Paragraph	
-Topic Sentence- This sentence must support the theme of the Introductory paragraph, and summarize or conclude the Supporting paragraphs.	_____
-At least 3 details, examples, or reasons that support the topic sentence of this paragraph. There should be no new details, examples, or reasons in this paragraph.	_____ea.
-Summary or Conclusion Paragraph- This sentence should summarize or conclude this paragraph, and if possible, the theme of the paper.	_____
	¶ Total _____

Paper Total: 100

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA FOR GRADING WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Did the student attempt to produce the assigned work?
In other words, did they ignore what they were instructed to write about and replace it with an easier assignment?
- 2) Is the construction correct and of an appropriate length?
ie. Title, introduction, one main topic per paragraph, conclusion, footnotes, bibliography
- 3) Is the spelling, grammar and punctuation correct?
- 4) Is the sentence structure interesting and active, using a variety of sentence types?
- 5) Does the writing illustrate critical or creative thinking?
Is it original?
- 6) Are the main points stated clearly and supported using logic, quotations, examples or statistics?
- 7) Is there improvement compared to the last writing assignment?
- 8) Is it obvious that the appropriate amount of thought or research went into the writing?
- 9) Is the writing legible?
- 10) Are the reasons for your conclusion clear?