

DISCUSSION OF CASE GRADING CRITERIA

I will grade your papers on the assumption that you know basic rules regarding spelling, grammar (including sentence structure), and punctuation due to English courses you took in high school and college. My expectation at this level of education is that I will be able to focus on the content of any paper you write in this course. If I am not able to focus on the content of the paper due to numerous spelling, grammatical, or punctuation errors, I will stop grading the paper and return it to you (see the next section on important grading information).

I will make corrective notations on your papers based on the assumption that you understand proper spelling, grammatical, and punctuation concepts and any errors are just mistakes. I will not spend time explaining the reasons why a sentence is marked as grammatically incorrect. I will assume that you will understand a notation such as, “incomplete sentence” or the correcting of “then” to “than”.

Your first contact, and hence your first impression, with others often comes via writing. This is true whether you are applying for a job using a letter of application or meeting a business contact using e-mail. Being able to write well is important. I expect good writing. I will grade your papers harshly if they are poorly composed and if they have multiple grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors.

IMPORTANT GRADING INFORMATION

I will only allow 15 errors on a paper. Wordy sentences that are written like you speak will be worth multiple grammatical errors. When I reach 15 errors due to spelling, grammar, or punctuation, I will return the paper with a score of 10/30. You will not have a chance to rewrite the paper. Therefore, if you want me to grade the content of your papers, you will need to write properly so I may focus mostly on the content.

Use the spell check and grammar check options in your word processing software. Set the options to include “readability statistics”. This gives you the grade level. Those of you who write like you speak may find that your writing style is at the junior-high level.

If you have serious problems writing, you may be in danger of not passing my class unless you receive help. Help can come in the form of fellow students, friends, family, or the student writing lab available through the Academic Support Center.

Rationale for Grading Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling

I can best illustrate the rationale for grading grammar, punctuation, and spelling by using an extreme example. Suppose you are a 4.0 GPA student, but you have trouble writing. This will reflect poorly on you and the university. Regarding you, a potential employer will have certain expectations when seeing a 4.0 on the transcript. These raised expectations will be immediately unmet upon seeing your writing. This means the “first impression” is forever a negative one. Also, the incongruence between the GPA and the writing ability will cause the potential employer to believe that the GPA of 4.0 doesn’t really reflect your abilities, and this may result in “negative halo”. Regarding the university, the potential employer will make some assumptions about the quality of the education provided at MSUB if a student can earn a 4.0 GPA and not be a “4.0 write”.

Advice

I have some writing advice based on past papers from the class members.

FORMATTING ADVICE

Please use 1” margins when I require them in an assignment. Many of you are not noticing that the default margins in Microsoft Word are 1.25” for the left and right margins. Please change those. Also, some of you are not using “hard pages” to move from the title page to the first page of your text. When you use returns instead of a “hard page”, difference in formatting ability between my printer at work your printer at home may cause the paper to look differently when I receive it (e.g., your first line may begin at the bottom of the title page).

Use paragraphs to improve the flow of your paper. Please indent the first line of each paragraph rather than use “block style” paragraphs. Block style formatting in double-spaced papers is not a valid formatting choice.