



Checklist for Evaluating Expository Essays

courtesy of the

Franklin & Marshall College
Writing Center

I. Subject, Audience, and Thesis

- a. Have I addressed the assignment?
- b. Have I narrowed the topic sufficiently?
- c. Why do I think that the subject is worth writing about?
- d. Who is the audience for this essay?
- e. What is the main idea I want to express about my topic – my thesis or the assertion that will be supported in the essay?
- f. What verb explains what I am trying to do in this essay – tell, compare, describe, support, etc.?
- g. Does my introduction answer questions **a** through **f**? If not, why not?

II. Organization

- a. Does the essay have an obvious beginning, middle, and end; and are its parts related to each other?
- b. How many specific points do I make about my subject? Do any points overlap or repeat? Have I left out any points or added some not relevant to the main idea?
- c. How many paragraphs do I use to talk about each point? Do I leave points out or add some not relevant to the essay's main idea (thesis)?
- d. Why did I choose the order I did? Should the order be changed?
- e. How did I get from one point to another? Did I give the reader signals? Are there smooth transitions within and between paragraphs?
- f. Does the conclusion reaffirm the central thesis of the essay? Does it summarize or draw conclusions as appropriate?

III. Development

- a. Is the essay of sufficient length for its topic and purpose?
- b. Does the essay tell the reader all the reader needs to know?
- c. Is there enough explanation to make my point clear?

IV. Paragraphing

- a. Does each paragraph support the main idea of the essay?

- b. What is each paragraph supposed to do? How does it relate to the paragraph preceding and following it?
- c. Does each paragraph contain a central idea? Will the reader have trouble recognizing it?
- d. Does each paragraph contain adequate support for or explanation of its central idea?

V. Mechanics and Style – *Ask these questions of each sentence*

- a. Is the sentence clear, idiomatic, and grammatically correct?
- b. Is the spelling correct – particularly key terms? What words do I typically misspell?
- c. Is conventional punctuation followed? What kinds of punctuation errors did I make on my last paper?
- d. Is there appropriate variety in my sentence structure?
- e. Can I cut out words and combine sentences?

* The thesis statement/topic sentence format is highly desirable in functional prose because it is easy to follow and thus helpful to the reader intent on the essay's content. It is true, however, that professional writers do not always use this format in arranging their material, and college students too may well choose another design. The important thing is that a definite plan be apparent in the essay. Furthermore, in long essays, more than one paragraph may make up the introduction or conclusion, or may be used to develop the supporting points.