

Textual Analysis Essay Checklist

Instructions: Please read through this checklist before beginning your rough draft and then use it as a final revision checklist before turning in the final draft. You will not be required to turn in this checklist, but you should find it a helpful guide as you draft and revise.

The Introduction

Introductory Paragraph

1. ___ Opens with an attention grabber
2. ___ Provides a general introduction to the subject and narrows toward the discussion of the professional essay
3. ___ Avoids referencing the professional essay as it has not yet been introduced or summarized
4. ___ Is not more than half a page long

Summary Paragraph

1. ___ Comes directly after the introductory paragraph
2. ___ Opens with a statement of the author's full name, the title of the professional essay, and the professional essay's main point
3. ___ Overviews the professional essay's major arguments and tone
4. ___ Avoids going in-depth into side issues or sub-points
5. ___ Avoids reliance on quoting the professional essay
6. ___ Is at least six sentences but no more than three-fourths a page
7. ___ Ends with your thesis statement

The Body

General Considerations

1. ___ Each main point clearly ties to the thesis statement.
2. ___ Each main point is developed with at least one paragraph.
3. ___ Due to clear transitions, the reader can easily see the flow of ideas from one paragraph to the next.
4. ___ The body fully supports (illustrates, explains, and/or proves) the major argument made in the thesis statement.
5. ___ The body focuses on analysis (why and how) not summary or response.

Body Paragraphs

1. ___ Each body paragraph opens with a paragraph-level transition showing a connection between the ideas in the prior paragraph and the new paragraph.

2. ___ Following the transition (or as part of the transition) each body paragraph opens with a clear topic sentence which states the main point of that paragraph.
3. ___ Topic sentences are statements and not questions.
4. ___ Topic sentences relate clearly to the development of the thesis.
5. ___ When appropriate, the paragraph *briefly* quotes, paraphrases, or summarizes the professional essay's point in relationship to the topic sentence and *then analyzes* that point.
6. ___ The discussion in each paragraph focuses on analyzing WHY the professional essay integrated a particular textual element and HOW that element might impact both audience and purpose.
7. ___ Each paragraph uses transitions to show connections between ideas.
8. ___ When possible, each paragraph closes with a sentence which reiterates the topic sentence and ties all ideas in the paragraph together.

The Conclusion

1. ___ Opens with a paraphrase of the thesis
2. ___ Ties together the main points in the body to show how they prove the thesis
3. ___ Avoids merely reviewing the main points
4. ___ Answers the question "So what?" by exploring potential implications, consequences, or social responsibilities related to the essay's discussion
5. ___ Ends with a clincher (effectively worded, thought provoking sentence) if possible
6. ___ Is at least one-third of a page in length

The Entire Essay: General Considerations

Style and Tone

1. ___ The essay avoids 1st person (I, me, my, we, us, our) except in the case of quotations or personal examples which support larger, more objective points.
2. ___ The essay avoids 2nd person (you, your, you're) except in quotations.
3. ___ The essay avoids cliché (overused words or phrases like "sick as a dog" or "dead as a doornail").
4. ___ The essay avoids vague language (such as "thing," "stuff," and "something").
5. ___ The essay avoids unclear, vague references (using words like "this," "these," "that," and "it" when readers don't know what these words reference).
6. ___ The essay avoids colloquialisms and slang (words like "nowadays," "cool," and "totes").
7. ___ The essay avoids redundancy.
8. ___ The essay illustrates sentence structure variety.

MLA and Documentation and Source Integration

1. ___ After the first time you reference your source in the summary, you refer to the author by last name only.
2. ___ Titles of short works (essays, articles, chapters, poems, TV episodes) are in quotation marks.

Examples:

- “The Smurfette Principle” and “Television as Teacher”
- “The Road Not Taken” and “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

3. ___ Titles of long works (books, television programs, movies, plays) are italicized.

Examples:

- *From Inquiry to Academic Writing*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and *Les Miserables*
- *Sesame Street*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Lord of the Rings*

4. ___ References to the professional text are opened with a signal phrase.

Examples:

- **Pollitt suggests that** paraphrase (545).
- **Postman believes,** “ quote ” (427).

5. ___ All sentences paraphrasing, quoting, or summarizing the professional text end with a parenthetical citation containing the page number from which you took the reference.

Example:

- According to Postman, “television has by its power to control the time, attention, and cognitive habits of our youth gained the power to control their education” **(424)**.

6. ___ Any time three or more words in a row are taken from a source, quotation marks are used.

Example:

- Pollitt believes that the presence of only **“a lone female”** in a cartoon populated by male characters leads to children subconsciously learning sexist principles (545).

7. ___ Paraphrases and summaries avoid borrowing the source’s exact language or sentence structure.

8. ___ The essay incorporates at least two quotations from the source to which you're responding.
9. ___ The essay does not rely heavily on quotations and avoids the use of block quotes (quotes taking up four full lines or more of your essay).
10. ___ The essay contains a works cited page which provides an MLA bibliographic entry for the essay you're analyzing and follows MLA formatting guidelines. (The MLA section of your Rules for Writers handbook provides an example of how to cite a short work from an anthology. You can look back at your Summary and Response Essay and at the Sample Student Essays for further examples.)

Formatting

1. ___ Your name, the instructor's name, the course, and the date appear in the top left hand corner of the first page. (See the Sample Student Essays for examples of proper formatting).
2. ___ Your last name and the page number appear in the upper right hand corner of each page including the works cited page.
3. ___ The first line of every paragraph is indented (by hitting the "tab" button once).
4. ___ The entire essay is double-spaced.
5. ___ The entire essay is in 11 or 12pt Times New Roman font.
6. ___ The essay is formatted using 1inch margins for the top, bottom, left, and right margins.