

Philosophy Paper Grading Rubric

	Excellent	Good	Poor / Needs Improvement	Unacceptable
Argument				
Thesis	A clear statement of the main conclusion of the paper.	The thesis is obvious, but there is no single clear statement of it.	The thesis is present, but must be uncovered or reconstructed from the text of the paper.	There is no thesis.
Premises	Each reason for believing the thesis is made clear, and as much as possible, presented in single statements. It is clear which premises are to be taken as given, and which will be supported by sub-arguments. The paper provides sub-arguments for controversial premises. If there are sub-arguments, the premises for these are clear, and made in single statements. The premises which are taken as given are at least plausibly true.	The premises are all clear, although each may not be presented in a single statement. It is also clear which premises are to be taken as given, and which will be supported by sub-arguments. The paper provides sub-arguments for controversial premises. If there are sub-arguments, the premises for these are clear. The premises which are taken as given are at least plausibly true.	The premises must be reconstructed from the text of the paper. It is not made clear which premises are to be taken as given, and which will be supported by sub-arguments. There are no sub-arguments, or, if there are sub-arguments, the premises for these are not made clear. The paper does not provide sub-arguments for controversial premises. The plausibility of the premises which are taken as given is questionable.	There are no premises—the paper merely restates the thesis. Or, if there are premises, they are much more likely to be false than true.
Support	The premises clearly support the thesis, and the author is aware of exactly the kind of support they provide. The argument is either valid as it stands, or, if invalid, the thesis, based on the premises, is likely to be or plausibly true.	The premises support the thesis, and the author is aware of the general kind of support they provide. The argument is either valid as it stands, or, if invalid, the thesis, based on the premises, is likely to be or plausibly true.	The premises somewhat support the thesis, but the author is not aware of the kind of support they provide. The argument is invalid, and the thesis, based on the premises, is not likely to be or plausibly true.	The premises do not support the thesis.
Counter-Arguments	The paper considers both obvious and unobvious counter-examples, counter-arguments, and/or opposing positions, and provides original and/or thoughtful responses.	The paper considers obvious counter-examples, counter-arguments, and/or opposing positions, and provides responses.	The paper may consider some obvious counter-examples, counter-arguments, and/or opposing positions, but some obvious ones are missed. Responses are non-existent or mere claims of refutation.	No counter-examples, counter-arguments, or opposing positions are considered.
Understanding				
Text	The paper contains highly accurate and precise summarization, description and/or paraphrasing of text. The paper uses appropriate textual support for these.	The summarization, description and/or paraphrasing of text is fairly accurate and precise, having textual support, but other passages may have been better.	The summarization, description and/or paraphrasing of text is fairly accurate, but not precise, and the textual support is inappropriate.	The summarization, description and/or paraphrasing of text is inaccurate and/or has no textual support.
Ideas	The paper contains a highly accurate and precise description of the issue or problem, along with a careful consideration of possible alternatives or solutions. The paper contains relevant examples, and indicates the salient issues the examples highlight.	The description of the problem or issue is fairly accurate and precise, and possible alternatives or solutions are considered. Examples are given, but similar examples may have been better.	The description of the problem or issue is fairly accurate but not precise, and possible alternatives or solutions are either not considered, or ill-described. Examples are given, but it is not made clear how they are relevant.	The description of the problem or issue is inaccurate, and possible alternatives or solutions are not considered, and examples are not provided.
Analysis	The paper successfully breaks the argument, issue, or problem into relevant parts. The connections between the parts are clear and highly accurate.	The paper successfully breaks the argument, issue, or problem into relevant parts. The connections between the parts are fairly accurate.	The paper breaks the argument, issue, or problem into parts, but some parts may be missing or unclear. The connections between the parts are somewhat accurate.	The parts identified are not the correct and/or relevant ones. The connections between the parts are completely inaccurate.
Synthesis	The paper successfully integrates all relevant parts from various places into a coherent whole. The connections between the parts are clear and insightful.	The paper integrates most relevant parts from various places into a mostly coherent whole. The connections between the parts are generally clear.	The paper integrates some parts from various places into a somewhat coherent whole. The connections between the parts are somewhat unclear.	The parts to be integrated are not clear and/or relevant. The connections between the parts are unclear.
Evaluation				
Argument	The paper evaluates the argument in question by checking for adherence to various standards (validity, soundness, etc.), and checking for informal fallacies. The paper suggests how the argument could be made better according to the appropriate standard.	The paper evaluates the argument in question by checking for adherence to various standards (validity, soundness, etc.), and checking for informal fallacies.	The paper evaluates the argument in question by checking only the truth of the premises and/or the conclusion, and does not check for informal fallacies.	The paper evaluates the argument in question by whether the author agrees or disagrees with the conclusion or a premise.
Position	The paper evaluates the position in question by checking for support in an argument and internal consistency, and by exploring unmentioned plausible alternatives.	The paper evaluates the position in question by checking for support in an argument and internal consistency.	The paper evaluates the position in question by considering its plausibility.	The paper evaluates the position in question by whether the author agrees or disagrees with it.
Creation				
Thesis	Thesis is original, interesting, and relevant.	The thesis is interesting and relevant.	The thesis is slightly off-topic, obviously true (or false), or not really worth writing about.	The thesis is totally irrelevant.
Examples	Examples are original, relevant, insightful, and well-used.	Examples are original, relevant, and well-used.	Examples are unoriginal, minimally relevant, or not well-used.	Examples are missing, irrelevant and/or misused.
Alternative Positions	Previously unmentioned alternative positions are explored.	Alternative positions are explored.	Alternative positions are mentioned but not explored.	Alternative positions are ignored.
STYLE				

Clarity	All sentences are complete and grammatical. All words are chosen for their precise meanings. All new or unusual terms are well-defined. Key concepts and theories are accurately and completely explained. Good, clear examples are used to illuminate concepts and issues. Information (names, facts, etc.) is accurate. Paper has been spell-checked and proofread, and has no errors, and no rhetorical questions or slang.	All sentences are complete and grammatical. Most words are chosen for their precise meanings. Most new or unusual terms are well-defined. Key concepts and theories are explained. Examples are clear. Information (names, facts, etc.) is accurate. Paper has been spell-checked and proofread, and has very few errors, and no rhetorical questions or slang.	A few sentences are incomplete and/or ungrammatical. Words are not chosen for their precise meanings. New or unusual terms are not well-defined. Key concepts and theories are not explained. Examples are not clear. Information (names, facts, etc.) is mostly accurate. Paper has several spelling errors, rhetorical questions and/or uses of slang.	Many sentences are incomplete and/or ungrammatical. The author does not acknowledge that key words have precise meanings. Information (names, facts, etc.) is inaccurate. Paper has many spelling errors, rhetorical questions and/or uses of slang.
Organization				
Introduction	Thesis is clear, and contained in the introduction. The topic is introduced with minimal fanfare. It is made clear how the paper will get to this conclusion, not in a detailed outline of the paper, but rather in a concise summary of the steps in argument.	Thesis is contained in the introduction. The topic is introduced with little fanfare. It is generally clear how the paper will get to this conclusion, not in a detailed outline of the paper, but rather in a description of the steps in argument.	Thesis is not contained in the introduction. The topic is introduced with too much fanfare. The flow of the paper is described as an outline, and not as a description of the steps in argument.	Only the topic is introduced, with no description of the paper. Or, the paper is described inaccurately.
Body	It is very easy to follow the argument. It is made explicit which claims are being used as premises, and how these premises are supposed to support the thesis. New premises are each introduced in new paragraphs or sections. If there are sub-arguments, it is made explicit which argument is the main one, and which are the secondary ones.	It is generally easy to follow the argument. It is clear which claims are being used as premises, and how these premises are supposed to support the thesis. Usually, new premises are introduced in new paragraphs or sections. If there are sub-arguments, it is clear which argument is the main one, and which are the secondary ones.	It is somewhat difficult to follow the argument. It is somewhat unclear which claims are being used as premises, and/or how these premises are supposed to support the thesis. Separate premises are lumped together in the same paragraphs or sections. If there are sub-arguments, it is not clear which argument is the main one, and which are secondary.	It is impossible to follow the argument. It is completely unclear which claims are being used as premises. It is completely unclear how the premises are supposed to support the thesis. Premises are discussed randomly, or not at all. There seem to be many arguments, and it is completely unclear which is the main one.
Conclusion	The paper uses the conclusion to tie up loose ends. For example, the paper considers objections to the argument to which it is acknowledged there is no space or expertise to respond. Or, the paper briefly considers the implications of the acceptance of the conclusion for a larger argument, or for a larger issue or problem. Or the paper explains what further work may be needed in this area.	The paper uses the conclusion to tie up some loose ends, but combines this with a restatement of the introduction.	The conclusion is merely a restatement of the introduction.	The conclusion is missing.