

A Guide to Holistic Scoring

1. Once you have internalized the scoring guide, read for an impression of the whole paper and score immediately. Do not reread or analyze.
2. Read the entire paper. The writing sometimes improves dramatically as the writer continues, and it sometimes falls apart after the opening paragraph.
3. Read supportively. Try to reward what is done well, rather than search for small errors or omissions.
4. Take everything in the paper into account: content, organization, diction, sentence structure, spelling—everything.
5. Try to ignore handwriting. If the handwriting is too illegible to permit a rapid, holistic reading, give the paper to your Table Leader who will, if necessary, give the paper to the Question Leader.
6. Do not judge a paper by its length. Some short papers are good, and some long papers are poor.
7. Remember that the use of a literary example does not make an argument inherently better than a paper that uses examples from other sources.
8. Use the full scale; in the papers to be scored, there will be "1" and "9" papers.
9. Remember that each score category represents a range (a high "3," a solid "3," and a low "3," for example).
10. Remember that each paper is essentially a first draft written under stressful test conditions in a limited amount of time.
11. Remember that an unfinished, but developed, paper should not be penalized for lacking a conclusion.
12. Remember that the "9" paper need not be a polished or perfect essay.
13. Remember that any paper that addresses the topic is considered on topic and should be scored. A paper should not be penalized for a tangential/unusual approach to the topic. It should be scored on its own merits and on the logic of its argument developed in response to the topic as the writer interprets it.
14. Remember that the standards are set by consensus. Individual Readers are expected to accept and follow those standards, setting aside their individual or local scoring standards.
15. Remember that to the writer of the paper, the ideas expressed are fresh and original. Unlike the Readers, the writer has not already read a hundred papers that begin just like the one currently being scored.