

# Comp Quickreads

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October 19, 2009

## Assessment and Scoring Guides

### Using Scoring Guides

- Make the scoring guide available to students, preferably early in the term
- Devote class time to discussing the scoring guide
- Provide students with sample essays that exemplify the scoring guide
- Consider “norming” students by having them read and score sample student essays (or each other’s essays) as part of an extended peer review
- Refer to the specific language of the scoring guide when commenting on student essays

Beloved of accrediting bodies, scoring guides (or rubrics as they are sometimes called) are all the rage. A well-designed scoring guide can streamline the grading process by making clear to both the instructor and students what constitutes different levels of work. Scoring guides can ensure consistency in grading practices and transparency in the grading process by serving as a shared understanding of both the requirements of a project and the expectations of the instructor.

What exactly is a scoring guide? Briefly, it is a set of scoring guidelines for evaluating student work. The scoring guide indicates both the criteria that will be used to judge the work and distinguishes between different levels of performance. By identifying the criteria to be used to judge the work, a good scoring guide clearly articulates the instructor's expectations. And by distinguishing between different levels of performance a good scoring guide helps students determine how to meet those expectations. And when a scoring guide is shared with students early in the process, students become better judges of the quality of their own work and in peer review the work of others. The scoring guide also provides the instructor with language to give feedback on the quality of work.

All four composition courses at CSULA have scoring guides. The ENGL 095 and 096 scoring guides are used for evaluating end-of-the-quarter portfolios, while the ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 scoring guides are used for assigning grades to individual essays.

### 095 and 096 Scoring Guides

Since grades for ENGL 095 and ENGL 096 are determined by the student’s portfolio scores, the scoring guides for these courses represent not

simply an instructor’s idiosyncratic do’s and don’ts, but program and university expectations. Most experienced 095 and 096 instructors distribute the course scoring guide to students, spend class time reading and interpreting it, organize “norming” sessions to help students apply it, and use language from the scoring guide in their comments on student writing.

This last point is perhaps the most unappreciated, but possibly the most important. After having spent some time in class discussing the scoring guide, an instructor might note on an 096 student’s draft that at present it

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does “not respond to the text at all (see ‘3’ score),” or that it “consists mostly of generalizations without support (see ‘3’ score).” The scoring guide gives both student and instructor a shared language of assessment, which the instructor can invoke in his or her comments.

### 101 and 102 Scoring Guides

Assigning grades to individual essays is not an objective activity and yet it is also not purely subjective and idiosyncratic. Experienced teachers of writing tend to apply similar criteria and arrive at similar assessments and grader consistency is improved when a common scoring guide is used. The scoring guides for ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 ensure that students in different classes with different instructors will receive comparable grades for comparable work.

As in ENGL 095 and 096, the scoring guide is most effective when it is made available to students early in the course, is the subject of class discussion, and is specifically referred to in instructor comments.