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|  | 8 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Thesis | Thesis is clearly stated and reflects complexity. | Thesis, which is clearly stated, reflects some complexity and significance | Thesis is understandable but lacks depth and/or significance | Thesis is difficult to understand and lacks significance |
| Introductory paragraph | The introductory paragraph, which is properly shaped, generates interest, and provides structure for the body of the paper. | The introductory paragraph, which approaches proper design, establishes the scope of the paper and conveys broad research findings while not clearly identifying the structure of the paper. | The introductory paragraph, which may be incorrectly shaped, identifies some research findings but does not clearly establish the scope of the paper and does not identify the structure of the paper. | Introductory paragraph does not establish the scope of the paper and does not convey research findings; the paragraph is noticeably limited and/or poorly designed |
| Supporting paragraphs | Balanced presentation of relevant and legitimate information that clearly supports the thesis. Paragraphs show thoughtful sequencing and smooth transitioning between ideas. | Information is generally appropriate to the purpose of the paper. Sequencing is generally good and there is some use of transitions. | Some information is irrelevant to the thesis. Other information is somewhat inadequate to fully support your thesis. Very limited use of transitions. | Paragraphs do not adequately support thesis. Organization is lacking and there is no flow between topics. Transitions are not used. |
| Conclusion | Provides closure by reiterating thesis, summarizing most  important findings without adding new information. | Provides closure by reiterating thesis. Leaves some loose ends not adequately tied up or includes information that should have been in the body of the paper. | Provides closure by restating the thesis and providing a limited summary of findings | Conclusion does not provide closure because thesis is not revisited and/or research findings are not summarized |
| Use of quotations and research findings | Smoothly embeds carefully selected quotations to advance the understanding of the quote and its relationship to the thesis;  skillfully integrates research findings to enhance the paper’s overall message. Sources are legitimate and can be trusted. At least 5 sources were used. | Includes relevant quotations and research findings to answer focus questions and to support thesis. . Sources are legitimate. 4-5 sources used. | Includes some evidence to support thesis but the use of additional quotes or research findings could have been used to support the thesis and advance overall understanding. Some sources are questionable. 3 sources used. | The use of quotes and research findings is noticeably limited and results in an unsupported thesis. Sources are questionable. Less than 3 sources used. |
| In-text and works cited citations | All internal citations are properly formatted, correspond correctly to information sources, and the works cited page is fully accurate according to MLA formatting guidelines. | All internal citations correspond correctly to information sources and nearly all are properly formatted; the works cited page is accurately presented in MLA format with minimal exception | While internal citations correspond to information sources, in several cases information is inaccurate, incorrectly formatted or incomplete; works cited page contains some formatting errors | Significant citation and works cited errors, plagiarism is a clear possibility and/or formatting errors significantly limit usefulness of citations as source identifiers |
| Spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure | The paper is essentially error free; meaning is clear. Sentences are well phrased and varied in length and structure. | There are a few errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Errors occasionally obscure meaning. Sentences are well phrased and there is some variety in length and structure. Rare run-ons, comma splices or fragments. | There are several errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Sentences are awkwardly constructed and contain a number of run-ons, comma splices and/or fragments. Errors tend to obscure meaning. | Numerous errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation impact readability of the paper. Errors in sentence structure are frequent enough to be a major distraction to the reader. |
| Word choice | Word choice is precise and accurate. An academic tone is maintained throughout the paper. Consistently written in 3rd person. | Word choice is generally good. Occasional use of inappropriate slang or abbreviations. Tone is not always academic. Written in 3rd person consistently. | Word choice is merely adequate and the range of words is limited. Some word use is inappropriate for an academic tone. Slipped into 1st or 2nd person once or twice. | Many words are used inappropriately, seriously impacting the academic tone of the paper. 1st or 2nd person is used multiple times within the paper. |
| MLA format, font and length | Paper is 12 font, 4-5 pages in length including works cited page. MLA format is used accurately and consistently in the paper. Pictures and graphs do not seem used as fillers. | Paper is 12 font and length is 4-5 pages. There are a few errors in MLA format. Pictures and graphs do not seem used as fillers. | Paper is typed in 12 font. Pictures and graphs make up too much of the content, acting more like fillers than helpful content, or paper is less than 4 pages in length. | Paper is not typed or is in large or small font. Pictures and graphs make up too much of the content, acting more like fillers than helpful content, or paper is considerably short. |