

What Constitutes Graduate Level Writing?

Graduate level writing displays, above all, critical thinking skills. The writer demonstrates the ability to see various sides of an argument: he/she questions assumptions, avoids commonplaces and develops a clear argument from the available literature on the subject. This type of writing always establishes a purpose while addressing a specific audience. Often, graduate level writing also provides suggestions for further research and development beyond the limits of the course assignment.

Below is a list of features that characterize graduate level writing, each accompanied by a brief explanation:

- Graduate level writing provides an in-depth analysis of the issues that are being discussed. The writer is able to distinguish among primary and secondary sources and bases his/her work on objective findings while avoiding subjective statements. The writing is based on empirical evidence.
- Graduate level writing displays pertinent research. The writing avoids plagiarism by using documented research to support main ideas. The student consults sources that are deemed appropriate for his/her discipline and gives the reader full access to such sources through properly documented in-text citations and a reference page.
- Graduate level writing establishes a comprehensible purpose and addresses a specific audience. The student has a clear understanding of the assignment, knows the audience he/she is addressing and establishes the intentions of his/her writing.
- Graduate level writing employs a tone that is identified as formal writing and appropriate to an academic setting. The writer avoids the use of informal, conversational wording; clichés, contractions and generalizations are among the most common culprits.
- Graduate level writing demonstrates an awareness of the assignment's guidelines, purpose, audience, format, and constraints.
- Graduate level writing is logically organized. The writer builds his/her argument around a thesis or claim. The different sections of the paper are appropriately connected with transitions. Every paragraph flows logically from the previous paragraph, working to further develop the main idea. The writer provides details, specifics, and examples to enhance his/her argument.
- Graduate level writing demonstrates the student's ability to interpret the material. The writer distinguishes between a synthesis and an analysis and chooses accordingly. He/she is able to provide a summary of the most relevant findings when requested to do so or to provide a cogent analysis of the material.
- Graduate level writing is well written: it is clear, succinct, and free of errors in sentence syntax, punctuation, and grammar.

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