

Self- or Peer-Evaluation Checklist for Essay Answers

Before reading the essay, perform a visual inspection to see if the paper's appearance is professional:

- Is the essay neat and legible?
- Has the writer used paragraphs to mark the progression of the essay or is it a "stream of consciousness"?
- Are there headings (if appropriate) to lead the reader easily through the answer?

Read the essay for a sense of style and tone:

- If a role was required by the call-of-the-question, did the writer assume that role in the answer?
- Did the writer avoid use of such language as "I feel," "I believe," "clearly," and "obviously"?
- Was the writer's style clear and concise, making it easy for the reader to follow and understand the points being made?

Read the essay and focus on organization and substance:

- Has the writer addressed the specific call-of-the-question?
- Is the answer organized according to a basic IRAC structure or appropriate variation, CIRAC or IR/A construction, where fact analysis always follows rule identification?
- Has the writer correctly identified all the relevant issues?
- Is there an adequate explanation of the applicable rule? Consider the following:
 - Has the writer used legal terminology and defined all relevant terms of art?
 - Is the rule written in its logical order which is usually from the general to the specific?
 - Is there a reliance on "buzz-words" without "back up" explanation?
 - Is there "enough" rule to provide an adequate context for analyzing the facts?
 - Is there identification of the relevant exception but no statement of the general rule to provide context?
- Is the law applied to the facts? Consider the following
 - Are the facts explained in light of their legal significance?
 - Does the writer use the word "because" to make the connection between rule and fact and thus avoid conclusory statements?
 - Is every conclusion supported by an explanation of the "why" behind it?
 - Is every fact of consequence "used" in the analysis?
 - Have the counter-arguments been addressed?
- Does the essay segue appropriately between issues and sub-issues?
- Does the essay end with an express conclusion if required by the question?

This checklist was adapted from one created by Professors Michael Hunter Schwartz and Denise Riebe.