**AP® STUDIO ART SCORING GUIDELINES**

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**2-D Design Portfolio**

General information and a few provisos:  
• The scoring guidelines for the AP portfolios contain score points from 6 (excellent) through 5 (strong),  
4 (good), 3 (moderate), 2 (weak), and 1 (poor).  
• Each score point is characterized by a variety of descriptors of work that would receive that score.  
• Because there are only six different points on the scale, each score point represents a band or range of  
accomplishment.  
• Some of the descriptors may seem to contradict each other because the range of possibilities for work at a  
given score point is so great.  
• The descriptors are examples; it is not expected that all the descriptors for a scale point will apply to any  
one particular portfolio.  
• The descriptors intentionally discuss general aspects of artwork at each score point; there is no preferred  
(or unacceptable) content or style.  
• The descriptors (taken as a whole) capture characteristics of work that merits each score.  
• This is a living document—one that evolves over time. Though these are the scoring  
guidelines that were used in 2008, (2009 is yet to be published) they are always open to subsequent revision.

**Principles of 2-D Design:**

**• Unity/Variety**

**• Balance/Emphasis/Contrast**

**• Rhythm**

**• Repetition**

**• Proportion/Scale**

**• Figure-Ground Relationships**

**2-D Design QUALITY—Section I**

Five works that demonstrate your mastery of design—apparent in the composition, concept, and  
execution of the works.

**6 EXCELLENT QUALITY. Work at this level:**

• is consistently of high quality, although not all pieces will necessarily be at precisely the same level of  
expertise;  
• shows an imaginative, inventive, and confident articulation of the principles of design;  
• shows accomplished use of the elements of design guided by the principles;  
• shows a well-informed sense of composition;  
• shows obvious evidence of thinking;  
• demonstrates evidence of confidence and of verve;  
• addresses fairly complex visual and/or conceptual ideas;  
• uses materials effectively; technique is generally excellent;  
• may show successful engagement with experimentation and/or risk-taking;  
• may be notable for sensitivity and/or subtlety;  
• demonstrates informed decision-making.  
• Any apparent use of published or photographic sources or the work of other artists clearly provides a  
visual reference in the service of a larger, personal vision.

**5 STRONG QUALITY. Work at this level:**

• is generally strong, although there may be inconsistencies in overall quality;  
• demonstrates a strong grasp of the elements and principles of design, using them to express  
a visual idea;  
• shows generally strong composition;  
• shows effective manipulation of the elements of design within the work as a whole;  
• shows evidence of thinking; i.e., it conveys a sense that it is about something;  
• is fairly confident;  
• may have evocative qualities;  
• successfully engages with most aspects of technique and materials.  
• Any apparent use of published or photographic sources or the work of other artists  
shows a strong sense of the student’s individual transformation of the images.

**4 GOOD QUALITY. Work at this level:**

• has some sense of purpose or direction, but it may not be fully resolved;  
• demonstrates a good understanding of the elements and principles of design;  
• uses the elements of design in support of at least one principle of design;  
• shows generally purposeful composition;  
• demonstrates some degree of success;  
• shows some manipulation of ideas;  
• has some technical aspects that are handled well or some ideas that are handled well,  
but the two do not always mesh or work together;  
• shows a sense of technical competence.  
• If there is apparent use of published or photographic sources or the work of other artists,  
the student’s individual “voice” can be discerned.

**3 MODERATE QUALITY. Work at this level:**

• shows an emerging understanding of the elements and principles of design;  
• shows a stronger emphasis on the elements of design than on the principles;  
• demonstrates a limited sense of composition;  
• shows a sense of real effort, but problems are not successfully resolved;  
• is more accomplished technically than it is conceptually;  
• might not show the technical skills needed to resolve the ideas it addresses;  
• has erratic technique, with little or no sense of challenge;  
• shows some ambition while achieving only moderate success.  
• If published photographic sources or the work of other artists are used, the work appears  
to be a nearly direct reproduction; the student’s “voice” is minimal.

**2 WEAK QUALITY. Work at this level:**

• is generally awkward;  
• shows little understanding of elements and principles of design;  
• may show some ability at using the elements of design with little awareness of the principles;  
• is weak in terms of composition;  
• employs simplistic solutions to design problems;  
• has little sense of exploration;  
• shows limited artistic decision-making.  
• The works are copies of published or photographic sources or the work of other artists;  
there is little discernible student “voice.”

**1 POOR QUALITY. Work at this level:**

• is generally inept;  
• shows no apparent understanding of the principles of design;  
• is poorly composed;  
• has minimal understanding of the elements of design;  
• shows little evidence of thinking/artistic decision-making;  
• lacks a clear sense of intention;  
• reveals a lack of understanding of technique;  
• shows a lack of awareness of tools/media;  
• uses trite solutions to visual problems.  
• The works are obviously direct copies of photographic sources or the work of other artists;  
there is no discernible student “voice.”

**2-D Design CONCENTRATION—Section II**

A concentration is defined as “a body of work unified by an underlying idea that has visual coherence.” In  
scoring concentrations, there are four major areas of concern.  
• Coherence and/or development—is the work presented actually a concentration?  
• Quality of the concept/idea represented—is there evidence of thinking and of focus?  
• Degree of development and investigation that is evident in the work—including the amount of  
work or number of pieces represented.  
• Quality of the work in both concept and technique.  
Note: These four areas will necessarily appear in shifting relationships of relative strength and weakness.  
When the four are not even in the level of achievement they represent, they will be considered as a whole  
to arrive at the score for the section.  
Because this section is concerned with a process of growth and discovery, the work presented may span a  
range of levels of achievement. If this is the case, the higher level that is reached should be acknowledged  
in the score that is given.  
The scoring guidelines that follow provide examples of overall characteristics of concentrations that would  
merit each of the six scores.

**6 EXCELLENT CONCENTRATION**

• There is an unmistakable connection between the idea of the concentration and the work presented.  
• The concentration engages the viewer with the work and the idea.  
• The work shows effective integration of concept and design skills.  
• Technical aspects are strong to excellent.  
• The work shows informed risk-taking and development beyond technical concerns.  
• An evocative theme is carried out.

**• The work demonstrates an original vision.**

• Overall, the work is of excellent quality.

**5 STRONG CONCENTRATION**

• The work and the concentration topic have a close relationship.  
• The idea of the concentration is good to strong.  
• There is evidence of thought in the work.  
• The work is technically competent; skill is evident.  
• There is evidence of effective pursuit of the idea.  
• There may be some less successful pieces, but overall the work shows a strong grasp of design  
principles.  
• The work shows a sense of transformation over time, although it may not be totally successful.  
• An evocative theme is investigated.  
• Overall, the work is of strong quality.

**4 GOOD CONCENTRATION**

• There is a sense of concentration, and the work is related to the idea.  
• The work may be inconsistent in terms of quality, but overall the application of design principles is  
good.  
• Manipulation of ideas is evident.  
• Some growth and discovery are evident.  
• The work may be a concentration and be technically competent but with an incomplete sense of  
investigation.  
• Although the work is of strong or excellent quality, it is not a concentration.  
• Overall, the work is of good quality.

**3 MODERATE CONCENTRATION**

• The work is a concentration, but the topic is inadequately considered.  
• The concentration may include several loosely related ideas.  
• The concentration may be so broad that the student could not really explore an idea in depth.  
• The work may be inconsistently related to the idea.  
• Some growth is evident, but only moderate understanding of design principles is demonstrated.  
• Although the work may be of good quality, it is not a concentration.  
• Overall, the work is of moderate quality.

**2 WEAK CONCENTRATION**

• There is little investigation of the idea.  
• The idea is appropriate for a concentration, but the knowledge and understanding needed  
to execute it are not evident.  
• A concentration is presented, but the work is weak in application of design principles.  
• The work may appear to constitute a good start, but it does not show sufficient investigation.  
• Although the work shows moderate grasp of design principles, it is not a concentration.  
• Quantity of work may be lacking.  
• Overall, the work is of weak quality.

**1 POOR CONCENTRATION**

• There is very little or no sense of investigation.  
• The idea of the concentration is not carried out.  
• The work shows very little or no evidence of understanding of design principles.  
• There is a lack of an underlying rationale that would link the work.  
• There is not enough work to represent a concentration.  
• The slides are virtually impossible to see.  
• Overall, the work is of poor quality.

**2-D Design BREADTH—Section III**

A variety of works demonstrating understanding of the principles of design. Look for engagement with a  
range of design principles:

**Unity Variety Balance Emphasis Contrast**

**Rhythm Repetition Proportion Scale Figure-Ground Relationship**

**6 EXCELLENT BREADTH**

• The work demonstrates serious, successful engagement with a broad range of design problems.  
• The work demonstrates confident articulation of the principles of design.  
• The work uses the elements and principles of design in inventive or evocative ways.  
• Most work demonstrates successful experimentation, risk-taking, and/or ambition.  
• The work is technically accomplished.  
• The work addresses sophisticated/complex ideas with confidence and verve.  
• Form and content are synthesized to communicate visual ideas.  
• Overall, the work is of excellent quality.

**5 STRONG BREADTH**

• The work demonstrates engagement with a broad range of design problems.  
• The work demonstrates successful articulation of the principles of design.  
• The work may demonstrate successful experimentation and/or risk-taking.  
• The use of materials is appropriate to the problems addressed, and technique  
is generally strong.  
• The work addresses sophisticated and/or complex ideas with some success.  
• The work shows clear decision-making.  
• The link between form and content is strong.  
• Overall, the quality of the work is strong.

**4 GOOD BREADTH**

• The work shows engagement with a reasonable range of design problems.  
• The work demonstrates a clear effort to apply the principles of design with some success.  
• The work may appear as very successful solutions to design exercises but does not go beyond  
that level.  
• Technique and use of materials is reasonably competent.  
• The work shows an emerging sense of ambition and/or sophistication.  
• There is evidence of thinking in most of the works.  
• There is some relationship between form and content.  
• Range of design problems may be limited despite strong to excellent quality.  
• The work may demonstrate strong-to-excellent breadth of design problems attempted but be  
of less than good quality.  
• Overall, the work is of good quality.

**3 MODERATE BREADTH**

• The work shows engagement with a superficial range of design problems.  
• Understanding and application of design principles is emerging.  
• The work may appear to be good solutions to design exercises but not go beyond that level.  
• Technical skill is uneven or questionable.  
• The work may show slight experimentation or risk-taking.  
• There is evidence of a modest level of thinking/decision-making in the work.  
• The relationship between form and content is unclear.  
• The work may be of good quality but with a narrow range of experience demonstrated.  
• The work may exhibit good breadth but be of less than moderate quality.  
• Overall, the work is of moderate quality.

**2 WEAK BREADTH**

• The work shows little engagement with a range of design problems.  
• Understanding of design principles appears to be fairly undeveloped.  
• The work may attempt to address a range of design issues without much success.  
• Technique/use of materials is awkward.  
• The work may demonstrate good to moderate technique, but the engagement with the  
principles of design is weak.  
• Solutions to a range of problems may be simplistic.  
• Evidence of thinking/decision-making is slight or present in only a few works.  
• There is little apparent relationship between form and content.  
• The work may be moderate in quality but not address a range of design issues.  
• There may be a moderate demonstration of breadth, but the work is of poor quality.  
• Overall, the work is of weak quality.

**1 POOR BREADTH**

• The range of design problems addressed is extremely limited.  
• Understanding of design principles is questionable or lacking.  
• The work may be weak in quality and not address a range of design issues.  
• A variety of design problems are attempted, but solutions are generally unsuccessful.  
• Technique is clumsy/incompetent.  
• The work may demonstrate moderate to weak technique, but the engagement with the  
principles of design is poor.  
• Solutions tend to be inept or trite.  
• Little, if any, evidence of thinking/decision-making is present in the work.  
• Form, material, and content are unconsidered.  
• Not enough work is presented to demonstrate breadth.  
• The slides are virtually impossible to see.  
• Overall, the work is of poor quality