How to Score Wine: WineTen

Ten points, four questions, whole numbers only. A simple, weighted way to judge how good a wine is.

Remember it: Can Love Be Complex?

Concentration, Length, Balance, Complexity. Score in that order and the points count up: 1, 2, 3, 4. Complexity counts most because it best separates good wine from great wine. Concentration counts least because once a wine is fully expressed, more of it makes the wine bigger, not better.

Can

CONCENTRATION · 0 TO 1

○

- **1** Fully expressed for its style
- **0** Dilute

Love

LENGTH · 0 TO 2

○ ○

- **2** Flavor lingers well past the swallow
- **1** Moderate
- **0** Short, or only acid, alcohol, or bitterness remains

Be

BALANCE · 0 TO 3

○ ○ ○

- **3** Nothing sticks out
- **2** One element slightly prominent, settles by the finish
- **1** One element clearly out: heat, green tannin, flabby acid, cloying sugar
- **0** Disjointed, several elements out

Complex?

COMPLEXITY · 0 TO 4

○ ○ ○ ○

- **4** Layered, evolving, still revealing on every sip
- **3** Layered and changing in the glass
- **2** Several distinct layers: fruit plus earth, spice, lees, or age
- **1** Simple but clean, a few clear notes
- **0** One note

Three rules

1. **Balance cap.** If Balance scores 0 or 1, the total can't go above 6. A complex wine that's hot or green is interesting, not great.
2. **Judge for the style.** Concentration and Complexity are measured against what that style and age can deliver. A great young, simple white can still earn a 3 for Complexity.
3. **Faulted wines aren't scored.** Cork taint, excessive volatile acidity, unintended oxidation, or reduction that doesn't blow off. Note the fault instead.

What the score means

SCORE	BAND	ROUGHLY, ON A 100-POINT SCALE
10	Outstanding	98 to 100
9	Outstanding	94 to 97
8	Very good	90 to 93
7	Very good	87 to 89
6	Good	84 to 86
5	Good	80 to 83
3 to 4	Acceptable	70 to 79
0 to 2	Poor	Under 70

The 100-point column is a rough guide for readers used to critics' scores, not a conversion.

WINE WITH SETH · WINE 101 · SCORING CARD

Can Love Be Complex?

Taste first. Fill the dots. Count to ten.

1. WINE _____

NOTES _____

CONCENTRATION ○
LENGTH ○ ○
BALANCE ○ ○ ○
COMPLEXITY ○ ○ ○ ○

____ / 10 Balance 0 or 1? Max 6.

2. WINE _____

NOTES _____

CONCENTRATION ○
LENGTH ○ ○
BALANCE ○ ○ ○
COMPLEXITY ○ ○ ○ ○

____ / 10 Balance 0 or 1? Max 6.

3. WINE _____

NOTES _____

CONCENTRATION ○
LENGTH ○ ○
BALANCE ○ ○ ○
COMPLEXITY ○ ○ ○ ○

____ / 10 Balance 0 or 1? Max 6.

4. WINE _____

NOTES _____

CONCENTRATION ○
LENGTH ○ ○
BALANCE ○ ○ ○
COMPLEXITY ○ ○ ○ ○

____ / 10 Balance 0 or 1? Max 6.

5. WINE _____

NOTES _____

CONCENTRATION ○
LENGTH ○ ○
BALANCE ○ ○ ○
COMPLEXITY ○ ○ ○ ○

____ / 10 Balance 0 or 1? Max 6.

6. WINE _____

NOTES _____

CONCENTRATION ○
LENGTH ○ ○
BALANCE ○ ○ ○
COMPLEXITY ○ ○ ○ ○

____ / 10 Balance 0 or 1? Max 6.

7. WINE _____

NOTES _____

CONCENTRATION ○
LENGTH ○ ○
BALANCE ○ ○ ○
COMPLEXITY ○ ○ ○ ○

____ / 10 Balance 0 or 1? Max 6.

8. WINE _____

NOTES _____

CONCENTRATION ○
LENGTH ○ ○
BALANCE ○ ○ ○
COMPLEXITY ○ ○ ○ ○

____ / 10 Balance 0 or 1? Max 6.