



Figure 1 The Writing Center and Academic Resource Center logo



Figure 2 A playful cartoon image of a figure using a large pencil and writing.

Types of Essays

What is an essay?

An essay is a short piece of writing, which is often from the writer's point of view. Essays can consist of a number of elements, including literary criticism, political manifestos, **arguments, observations of daily life, recollections, and reflections of the author.** This handout will cover argumentative/persuasive, research, compare/contrast, descriptive, evaluation, narrative, exposition, classification, and analysis essays.

Research:

A research essay includes a presentation of facts, which are based upon reading or consulting several sources. There are two types of research papers: argumentative and analysis. An argumentative research essay proves a point, while an analytical research essay simply informs the reader about the topic. Features of a research paper include:

- An interesting topic
- Description of a problem
- The definitions of the terms, concepts, and vocabulary you use.
- A summary of your research in the conclusion

Argumentative/Persuasive:

The function of an argumentative essay is to prove that the author's opinion about a particular subject are correct or more truthful than other opinions on the subject.

Features of an argumentative or persuasive essay include:

- A well-defined, controversial issue
- A counter argument
- A clear position taken by the writer
- A persuasive argument as to why the writer's stance is correct
- Support the thesis using facts, data, quotes, rhetorical questions
- A reasonable, confident tone/Lack of bias

Analysis:

An analysis essay, or often called an analytical essay, is a paper that presents a critical assessment of a text, concept, behavior, or other entity in a thorough and academic way. As its name suggests, an analysis essay intends to analyze using a variety of critical thinking skills and approaches. Features of an analytical essay include:

- A strong thesis that states the author's position on the text you are analyzing
- Facts and details to support the author's point of view
- A critical evaluation of the structure and information of the text
- A conclusion that restates the thesis in a different way than before and briefly restates the supporting details

Compare-Contrast:

Compare-contrast essays are informative because they discuss a subject in one of two ways. Either it identifies likenesses between two ideas or things that are commonly thought to be different, or it identifies differences between items that are commonly thought to be similar. There are two methods of writing this type of essay, which include:

- A thesis that is specific and backed up by a highly argumentative analysis

- *(Method 1)* First, the author can write all the information about the first subject of comparison. Then, he or she goes on to write about the points of another subject of comparison.
- *(Method 2)* One can take similar aspects of each subject and compare and contrast them, rather than separating the subjects.

Descriptive:

An essay rarely consists of just descriptions. It is usually within another type of essay. Description conveys the qualities of a subject – person, place, or object – by focusing on concrete sensory details of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Features of a descriptive essay include:

- A specific subject
- Specific, descriptive details
- A clear pattern of organization
- Adjectives and adverbs that help to describe the subject

Evaluation:

In our everyday lives, we are constantly evaluating, making judgments and forming opinions. Evaluative essays seek to prompt readers to examine their own values and to perhaps accept the view of the writer. This type of essay can be used in book and movie reviews, or it can be used to describe a work process, such as a recipe. Features of an evaluation include:

- An adequately described subject
- An assertion or definitive judgment
- An argument based on reasonable criteria
- A clear pattern of organization

Narrative:

Narrative essays are typically about detailed experiences that the writer has faced in life. It is a story that is meaningful to the author, which can be either real or imaginary. It describes how a certain event changed a major part of the writer's life and

how he or she reacted to this event. A narrative has a point to make and an idea to pass on. The writer uses details that are significant and merges them to build up a storyline that is easy for the reader to follow. Features of a narrative essay include:

- An introduction that clearly indicates the topic (an event or recurring activity, a personal experience, or an observation)
- Personal stories and a great amount of detail
- Generally in first person
- The writing should be personalized, reflecting the unique writing style and personality of the writer

Exposition:

The purpose of an expository essay is to present, completely and fairly, the views of others. It can also report about an event or a situation. Expository writing presents a subject in detail apart from criticism, argument, or development. Features of an expository essay include:

- A clear, concise and well-defined thesis statement (the last sentence of the introductory paragraph containing the main idea of an essay)
- Clear and logical transitions between paragraphs
- Body paragraphs with evidential support
- Evidence that is presented with creativity
- A conclusion that restates the thesis and highlights the evidence presented to support it

Classification:

A classification essay arranges and organizes a topic or subject into categories. The purpose of a classification essay is to break things down, so they can be further investigated. Features of a classification essay include:

- Complex subdivisions with detailed information about each class
- Consistency in the categories (Ensure all the information leads back to one point)

- Each category must be exclusive to the information provided in it (No two categories can overlap information)

In conclusion, each essay that we've discussed has its own purpose and importance. The task of writing an essay may seem daunting, but given the appropriate amount of time to write it and learning what the criteria is, essays become a lot easier to tackle.

Examples:

On the following page, there are examples of introductory paragraphs for each type of essay that will help with getting started.

Research:

Batteries come in many shapes and sizes. Some are no larger than a pill while others are too heavy to lift, but most batteries have one thing in common: they store chemical energy and change it into electrical energy. The cell is the basic unit that produces electricity. A battery has two or more cells, but people often use the word battery when talking about a single cell, too, like a dry cell. A dime-sized battery in a watch is a cell. Cells act like pumps to force electrons to flow along conductors.

Argumentative/Persuasive:

In the twenty-first century, most citizens of the modern world have practically forgotten how important it is to connect with nature. Despite all the technological advances and scientific inventions that make us believe we have nothing in common with the rest of the animal kingdom, we are still part of the planet, whether we realize it or not. Needless to say, back when humanity's main achievements were the invention of the round wheel, or specific tools for farming and agriculture, human beings were dependent on nature. Now, with the technological revolutions and discoveries that made our past history, we seem to pay little attention to nature, getting more and more disconnected from it everyday. However, the links we have with nature cannot disappear. There are a number of key reasons in favor of the concept that people should try to connect with nature more than they do today.

Analysis:

The idea of a human mission to Mars has been capturing the imagination of the scientific community and popular culture for decades, manifesting itself in cinema, literature, and art. Conceptualizations of how this mission would be planned, funded, and executed have waxed and waned since the space race of the mid-20th century. What has never been disputed is the fact that an expedition to Mars is a momentous undertaking, with high risks and unknown rewards. When a mission takes place, it will most likely result into settling a human base on the Red Planet, with a scientific base that may perform exploitation, and contribute to further colonization or even terraforming.

Compare/Contrast:

Health care has always been one of the key factors for a successful society. Medicine itself has a history spanning thousands of years, and specialized establishments for treating the sick have also existed for a long period of time. Simply stated, hospitals are institutions that cater to the patients by providing them with appropriate conditions and continuous care as they undergo medical treatment. All these services are geared towards restoring the patient's well-being. However, technological and scientific progress has made treatment options possible that weren't available a hundred years ago making a large contribution to health care. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the differences between hospitals today and a century ago. These differences are improved surgical techniques, safer use of anesthesia, and safer childbirth procedures.

Descriptive:

Bryce remembered the smell that permeated in the air that evening: a combination of the gingery sweetness of wildflowers, hazelnut crust, and ripe raspberries. The Smell of a hot summer evening, when the sun had already hidden its rays for the night, but the Earth was breathing out the steam of the day fever. That July, two years ago, was particularly hot, humid, and promised to be boring for Bryce Gordon. Having finished his second year in college and planning to spend the summer working

in the local amusement park, Bryce was not anticipating any glory. Moreover, most of his college friends had moved out of campus for the summer and traveled back to their homes while he was in Grindson for the whole summer since this was where he grew up and spent every summer of his life. The goal for the season was to simply stay in town and try to survive the heat of the Central Texas prairie.

Evaluation:

One of the most ambiguous movies shot by Stanley Kubrick is *The Shining*, a horror film that tells the story of a family that has moved into a hotel called “Overlook,” which was inhabited by ghosts. Throughout the movie, the plot develops around the Torrence family: Jack, Wendy, and their son Danny. Kubrick based the movie on a novel written by Stephen King. The literary source is rather thrilling and intriguing, and the movie can be given the same positive assessment.

Narrative:

It was mid-April on a beautiful day. I felt unsure about the rash decision I had just made to change high schools on a whim. I spent the majority of my previous year-and-a-half in high school scraping by in terms of academia; I knew a change needed to be made, or I’d never graduate. As I walked into my new educational institution, a flood of emotions flowed through me. This really meant that my old life was over. I left everything I knew to make something of my future. This was my new beginning, and I was determined to do my best.

Exposition:

Computers once had a singular purpose: to solve mathematical equations. Rapid advances in computer technology have altered the way in which people interact with computers, as well as the functionality of these intelligent machines. With the advent of a worldwide and nearly universally accessible Internet, the way in which we interact with each other has also changed drastically. People from all over the world can instantaneously exchange both business and personal information. Internet commerce has become a huge part of the daily lives of millions, as well as social networking and

streaming media. Most recently, portable electronics capable of nearly all internet-related tasks have become a common possession for the average middle-aged American. The unlimited free exchange of information has changed, and it is continuing to shift society at large in a profound way.

Classification:

In the early twentieth century, close to twenty-six million people attended nickelodeons weekly. Gross receipts totaled close to 100 million dollars yearly. The frequent movie watchers were immigrants, the working class, or the unemployed. All could understand the silent films; however, the middle and upper class did not attend the early film showing as they would not have been caught dead in the disreputable nickelodeons. During the silent picture era, movie studios produced three main categories of films. The western, slapstick comedy, and romance genres were used repeatedly during early motion picture production.

Based on the Following Resources:

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3. Spangler, Mary S., and Rita R. Werner. *The Structured Essay: A Formula for Writing*. Dubuque, IA:

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