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**ESSAY WRITING: ESSAY TYPES**

**Essay Types**

In an essay, a writer’s goal is to communicate a message to the reader. This can be done in a variety of ways and lengths. Although essays do have an organizational structure, the writer decides, based on the prompt, how much support he/she needs to best convey his/her message. Therefore, there is no formulaic, rigid structure unless your instructor has told you otherwise. Look at the various essay types below and take note that each essay type has a different purpose.

**1.** **Comparison/Contrast**

These essays require written development exploring *the similarities and differences*, usually between *two* concepts. The thesis highlights the main points that will be explored. In the body paragraphs, it is helpful to introduce both concepts briefly before writing about the similarities and differences.

**Example01:** The following topics can be developed through *comparing and contrasting*:

Two ways of studying for an exam- Two ways of losing weight: one healthy, the other dangerous- An online class compared to a traditional class…

**2.** **Literary Analysis**

This type of essay analyzes a work of literature to make a thesis statement, usually an interpretation that focuses on *one or two aspects of the work* (plot, character, point of view, theme, and setting). Textual evidence *(quotes and examples)* are used in the body paragraphs to support the interpretation outlined in the thesis. Remember to keep the tense present when referencing works of literature. When summarizing or paraphrasing the work, the writer must explain both the meaning of the summary and its relevance to the thesis. The conclusion summarizes the relation between the different examples and points, while also making a larger statement relating the work of literature to something outside it.

**Example 01:** If you were assigned an essay answering the question, “Is Hamlet mad or merely acting to avenge his father’s death?” you would answer the question in your thesis and then use examples from the play to prove that. You should have *clear main points* to support your interpretation of the work. You cannot make a literary interpretation if the actual book or poem cannot support that interpretation. You want to seem reliable to your reader. Making assumptions threatens your credibility as a writer. Therefore, it is sometimes helpful to find the quotes from the work that would support your interpretation before you start writing. That way, you can avoid reaching a dead-end and realizing that you do not have enough information in the text to support your thesis. If the writer is arguing that Hamlet is mad, he/she must have several main points that clearly explain why that is the case and also present quotes from the work that support those main points.

**3. Cause and Effect**

This type of paper requires an exploration of the causes of an issue and the effects that are created. The thesis can be exploratory and discuss possible effects. The conclusion for this type of essay can be a reflection in addition to a summary of the effects.

**Example 1:** If a professor asked for an essay about the causes and effects of global warming, you might begin your essay explaining what global warming is, and then describe the causes of global warming. Following that, you might explain the effects of global warming. The descriptions of causes and effects are not limited to two paragraphs; the number and the length of supporting paragraphs are based on the information you choose to include in your essay.

**Example 02:** The effects of poverty on an individual- The influence of a book or a movie on your life- Why students drop out of high school or college…

**4. Argumentation**

In this type of essay, the writer asserts a point which is then supported by details developed in the body paragraphs. In an argumentative essay, a writer should choose a clear side and not waver back and forth between the opposing views. To support the argument, the writer should present facts such as examples, statistics, and evidence from various sources. Reliable sources are government publications, books, and peer reviewed journals. Many argumentative papers require a counterargument that acknowledges the opposing viewpoint, but the writer must also show the flaws or weaknesses in the opposing argument. The counterargument is then refuted with evidence in favor of their argument. Finally, the writer’s conclusion should provide a sense of urgency to the reader that shows the strength of their argument.

The function of an argumentative essay is to show that your assertion (opinion, theory, and hypothesis) about some phenomenon or phenomena is correct or more truthful than others'. Argumentative writing is the act of forming reasons, making inductions, drawing conclusions, and applying them to the case in discussion

**Example 01**: If you answered an essay question regarding whether or not college athletes should be paid, you would begin your essay exploring both sides of this issue and conclude your introduction with a thesis asserting your argument. The thesis would either agree or disagree that college athletes should be paid. The body paragraphs would support the thesis with examples. If one argues that college athletes should be paid, then the body paragraphs would provide several main points explaining why it is necessary to pay these students. You would conclude your essay by summarizing the various examples and relating them to the thesis, with a brief reminder of the counterargument to show your readers that you are aware of other viewpoints

**Example 02:** Security cameras and privacy - The use of animals in scientific research- Artificial Intelligence: myth or fact?

**5.Classification (Division)**

It is an essay [development](http://grammar.about.com/od/d/g/Development-term.htm) in which a writer arranges people, objects, or ideas with shared characteristics into classes or groups .A classification essay often includes [examples](http://grammar.about.com/od/e/g/exampleterm.htm) and other [supporting details](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/Supporting-Details.htm) that are [organized](http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/organizaterm.htm) according to types, kinds, segments, categories, or parts of a whole. "The primary support in **classification** consists of the categories that serve the [purpose](http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/purpose-term.htm) of the classification. That is "The categories in classification are the 'piles' into which the writer sorts a [topic](http://grammar.about.com/od/tz/g/topicterm.htm) (the items to be classified). These categories will become the [topic sentences](http://grammar.about.com/od/tz/g/topicsenterm.htm) for the [body paragraphs](http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/Body-Paragraphs.htm) of the essay. "The [supporting details](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/Supporting-Details.htm) in classification are [examples](http://grammar.about.com/od/e/g/exampleterm.htm) or explanations of what is in each category. The examples in classification are the various items that fall within each category. These are important because readers may not be familiar with your categories."

**Example 01:** Methods of studying for a final examination- Ways of saving money- Gardeners

**6. Narration**

As one of the modes of expository writing, narrative offers us the opportunity to think and write about ourselves, to explain how our experiences lead to some important realization or conclusion about our lives or about the world, in general. Since a narrative writing relies mostly on personal experiences, it is often in the form of a story. When the writer uses this technique, he or she must be sure to include all the conventions of storytelling: plot, character, setting, climax, and ending. It is usually filled with details that are carefully selected to explain, support, or embellish the story.

**Example 01**: The Difficult decision - The trip of your dreams- If you were invisible

**7. Critical Essay**

A critical essay is an analytical examination of one or more works (usually literary, although art plays, and movies can be topics). The critical essay can take the form of a book review, a comparison of different presentations of a historical topic, a critique of policy proposals, and so on. The simplest critical essay is a review of a single work. Other critical essays can include multiple works and supporting sources and require extensive research Critical essays are not opinion pieces based on feelings or values. Any claims you make about a work you are evaluating must be based on facts and supported by evidence. Many students new to critical writing make the mistake of thinking “critical” means they are supposed to attack or find fault with the works they are criticizing. It is entirely possible to find yourself impressed with an author’s work and if that is the case you should say so. But your evaluation should be based on evidence regardless of whether it is positive or negative.

In short, a critical essay is a [composition](http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/compositionterm.htm) that offers an analysis, interpretation, and/or evaluation of a [text](http://grammar.about.com/od/tz/g/textterm.htm). Usually intended for an academic [audience](http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/audiencterm.htm), a critical essay often takes the form of an [argument](http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/argmterm.htm).

**Example01:** The politics of Obama - Shakespeare‘s novel: “The Merchant of Venice”- Fashion and identity

* **Remember:** The above categories are just samples. You may come across other sorts (or even names) like:

Descriptive-Expository-Exploratory-Reflective–Definition-Personal-Analytical-Persuasive-Process essays

* Reading more about and practicing the different types of essay is the unique way that helps you polish up your writing skill.