



# Types of Essays

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I. There are many kinds of essays. Below are some of the most common types. **Each type has a specific function.** Sometimes types are combined to create stronger essays.

A. **NARRATIVES** are essays which relate a story. If the author is involved in the story, it is called a personal narrative. Like all writing, narratives should have a purpose. Normally, narratives have the dual purpose of entertaining to teach a lesson.

The organization of the narrative is much the same as the organization for any other essay.

1. In the introduction the author states his subject and relates his purpose in his thesis statement. Also included in the introduction should be any necessary information leading up to the beginning of the story itself.
2. The body of the narrative should be the actual telling of the story. It should include all major details told in chronological order (the order in which the events occurred).
3. The conclusion of the narrative should restate the thesis statement and should offer suggestions to the reader about how to experience or avoid the situation which occurred in the story. Often times, morals are used here to help teach a lesson about life.

**NOTE:** If you are writing a **personal narrative**, it is perfectly acceptable to use the word "I." After all, it is a story about you.

B. **DESCRIPTION** is writing in which all or some of the senses are used to help the reader imagine the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and/or feel of the subject. Using specific adjectives, adverbs, and verbs helps to create better images for the reader.

Again, the organization is basic.

1. The introduction should include a thesis statement which reveals the topic and the writer's attitude toward it.
2. The body should include the actual description of the subject. Spatial order (describing the relationship in the order of location, for example, moving from left to right or top to bottom, etc.) is the most commonly used order for descriptive essays.
3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and let the reader know that there is nothing more to be said on the subject.

- C. **PROCESS PAPERS** explain how something is done, how something works, or how to make something.

The organization is basic.

1. The introduction of a process paper should introduce the subject and should also give a reason for the sharing of this information (why is the audience interested in knowing about this?).
2. The body of the process paper should list chronologically (what first? what second? and so on) all of the steps required to successfully complete the process. Make certain that no necessary steps are omitted.
3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and offer some further suggestions about implementing the process.

- D. **COMPARISON/CONTRAST** is another type of essay. To compare two things means to show how they are alike; whereas, to contrast two things means to show how they are different. Often times, the word "compare" is used to mean both compare and contrast. Essays can be just comparison, just contrast, or comparison and contrast.

1. The introduction of a comparison/contrast essay should introduce the two elements being compared and/or contrasted. It should also give a reason for the comparison and/or contrast. In other words, why does the reader want or need to know why the two subjects are alike and/or different.
2. The body of the comparison/contrast essay should provide details which support the thesis statement. Be sure to give equal time to each subject. For example, if you are comparing or contrasting two countries, make sure that if you discuss the government of one country that you also discuss the government of the other country.

**NOTE:** There are **two different methods** of presenting material in a comparison/contrast essay. One is to discuss everything about one subject and then everything about the second one (**block method**). The second method is to discuss one point about each subject and then a second point about both, etc. (**point by point method**).

3. The conclusion of the comparison/contrast essay should restate the thesis statement and let the reader know that all has been said about the subject.

- E. **ARGUMENTATIVE AND PERSUASIVE** essays are directed at a specific audience and are meant to change that audience's opinion about a particular subject. Argumentative essays normally involve some documented research; whereas, persuasive essays generally do not. Thus, argumentative essays are more powerful than persuasive essays.

The organization is basic.

1. The introduction should introduce the topic and the position held on the topic (either directly or indirectly), and your major reasons for support. Some other elements such as anecdotes, statistics, background information or other attention getters should also be used to help support your position and to interest the reader.
2. The body should include evidence that helps support your view. Major points should be made and backed up. It is also important to address and refute any major arguments of the other side (generally this is done in the first body paragraph). Be careful not to use any faulty reasoning when drawing conclusions.

**Avoid the following:**

- a. **HASTY GENERALIZATION**-jumping to conclusions without all of the facts.
  - b. **BAND WAGON**-going along just because everyone else is.
  - c. **NON-SEQUITUR**-an illogically drawn conclusion.
  - d. **RED-HERRING**-drawing attention away from the issue by bringing up another one.
  - e. **STEREOTYPING**-saying that all people of a race, religion, etc. are one way because some of them are.
  - f. **FALSE ANALOGY**-saying that just because two things have one thing in common that they are alike in other ways.
  - g. **AD HOMINEM**-attacking the person instead of the issue.
  - h. **BEGGING THE QUESTION** -circular reasoning.
  - i. **FALSE AUTHORITY** -giving evidence provided by someone who is not an expert in the field, usually a celebrity.
  - j. **FALSE CAUSE** or **POST HOC**-assuming that just because b came after a that a caused b.
  - k. **EITHER OR FALLACY** -stating that the answer is one of two choices when other alternatives exist.
  - l. **GUILT BY ASSOCIATION** -saying that because one person knows someone who is bad, that person is also bad.
  - m. **OVERSIMPLIFICATION**-an argument that only gives some of the evidence, leaving out some that is relevant.
  - n. **SLIPPERY SLOPE**-indicating that something is the first step in a total downfall.
3. The conclusion should restate the position of the essay and make one last effort to persuade the readers to adopt that view.

- F. **CLASSIFICATION-DIVISION** essays are concerned with putting things into specific categories. To classify means to place something into a larger group to which it belongs; whereas, to divide means to break it down and show what makes it fit into that class. Often classification and division are used in conjunction to help show the relationship of the topic to something else.

The organization is basic.

1. The introduction should introduce the topic and the characteristics by which it will be classified and divided. A reason for the need to classify and divide the subject might also be given.
2. The body of the classification essay should include examples of the divisions and examples of what makes something fit into a specific category.
3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and let the reader know that all has been said on the subject.

- G. **EXAMPLE** essays simply use examples to help illustrate a point. The more specific examples that are used, the better the essay will be.

The organization is basic.

1. The introduction should include a thesis statement which makes a statement that can be supported with examples.
2. The body should include supporting examples which can be broken down into more specific examples.
3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and let the reader know that all has been said.

- H. **DEFINITION** essays use various methods in order to help explain what a term means. Definition can be presented through examples, description, comparison/contrast, or negation (telling what something is not). Either one method or a combination of methods can be used to help define a term. Sometimes when defining a term, it is important to consider not only the denotation (dictionary definition), but also the connotation of the word (the feelings associated with the word).

The organization is basic.

1. The introduction should name the term to be defined and give an explanation for defining it.
2. Methods of defining either in combination or individually should be used to help the reader understand the term in the body of the paper.
3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and let the reader know that all has been said.

- I. **CAUSE/EFFECT** essays show the reasons that something happens and the results of its occurrence.

The organization is basic.

1. The introduction should include a thesis statement introducing the topic and indicating that the topic has specific causes and produces specific effects.
2. The body should give specific examples of the causes and effects related to the topic. Generally, the Causes are discussed first followed by the effects.
3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and possibly offer suggestions to avoid or to produce similar future experiences (depending on whether the effects are bad or good).

- J. An **ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE** essay attempts to explain some aspect of the work. It could be a character analysis, a theme analysis, a comparison/contrast, or classification. The writer could also use the historical approach, the biographical approach, or show how the work uses some literary device (satire, irony, symbolism, etc.).

The organization is basic with a few added extras.

1. In the introduction in addition to a thesis statement which indicates what type of analysis will be written, there should also be included the author's full name and title of the work being analyzed. An overall review of the story may also be helpful.
2. The body should include examples from the story that support the thesis statement. **DO NOT SIMPLY GIVE A PLOT SUMMARY; THAT IS A REPORT, NOT AN ANALYSIS.**
3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and let the reader know that all has been said on the subject.

**NOTE: CHECK ANY WRITING TEXTBOOK FOR SAMPLES OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ESSAYS OR ASK A TUTOR IN THE ENGLISH LAB FOR SAMPLES.**