

Writing the Essay

An essay is a piece of writing that discusses, describes, or analyzes a topic in several parts or paragraphs. The parts of an essay correspond to the parts of the paragraph; the thesis statement and supporting paragraphs of an essay correspond to the topic sentence and supporting sentences of the paragraph.

Descriptive essays present a detailed sense of the subject for the audience by drawing upon physical information to verify and validate a part or points. The descriptive essay should stimulate the imagination and make the subject more real to the reader.

Definition essays attempt to define a subject in a much deeper analysis than a dictionary definition; it should attempt to explain why the subject is defined as such.

Comparison and contrast essays analyze the similarities and differences between two subjects in order to evaluate and validate an argument. Comparison essays focus on the similarities of the subjects, while contrast essays focus on the differences of the subjects.

Cause and effect essays present logical connections between an event and what resulted from that event. The effect should demonstrate a clear relationship to the cause.

Narrative essays tell stories or reflect on personal experiences. Narration should include story conventions: climax, ending, and plot including setting and characters.

Process essays provide explanations of procedures. A series of steps, changes, actions, or operations is related in an ongoing, chronological order.

Argumentative essays attempt to persuade the reader to the writer's point of view. Logic and reasoning are utilized to show that one idea is more correct and legitimate than another.

Critical essays analyze the strengths, weaknesses and methods of a work. Critical essays generally begin with a brief overview of the piece, followed by an analysis of the piece's meaning. How well the author accomplishes goals and makes points is then discussed.

The traditional essay is developed in a five paragraph format consisting of an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The **introduction** is written from the general to the specific, ending with your thesis. The introduction should make clear the purpose of the essay and create interest for the reader. Each of your major points should be developed in the **body paragraphs** with smooth transitions connecting each paragraph. It is usually best to save your strongest point for your final body paragraph. The **conclusion** summarizes or re-emphasizes the major points of the essay beginning with a restatement of the thesis and moving from specific to general.

