

Writing Process - 1

Understanding Assignments

- 👉 When you are given an assignment, carefully read through it several times. Your instructor is not trying to trick you! Most of the information you need to successfully complete the project should be included on your assignment sheet. If you cannot find the information you need, ask!

Hints to Look for in the Assignment

- 👉 An overview: The instructor may offer contextual cues that are meant to set you on the right path. Use these details — in conjunction with material covered in class lectures — to begin thinking about how to best approach the assignment.
- 👉 Technical details: These are general guidelines, such as length, format, and due date. Make sure you understand and follow these requirements, as they are usually non-negotiable. Do not lose marks for formatting errors; if your instructor asks for MLA or APA format, take the time to learn what that means.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- 👉 Why have I been asked to complete this particular task? How does this project relate to things I have learned this semester? What has my instructor said that could help me succeed with this assignment?
- 👉 What have I learned in other classes that could help me succeed with this assignment?
- 👉 Who is my audience? What do they expect of me? How could I satisfy — or exceed — those expectations?
- 👉 What kind of evidence do I need to support my ideas? Do I need to do research? If so, what citation style is required?
- 👉 What is the tone of my paper? Should I be formal or informal? Should I be subjective or objective?

See the reverse side of this handout for an explanation of key terms that might help you better understand the requirements of your assignment.

Types of Essays

Persuasion

To *persuade* is to move someone to action. In a persuasive essay, your goal is not to change the mind of your reader, but to energize and move a reader who already shares (or at least leans toward) your viewpoint.

Position

In a *position* essay, your goal is to develop an informed stance on an issue with the hope that your reader will understand the logic behind your views. Use your opponent's thinking to sharpen your own focus.

Evaluation

In an *evaluation* essay, you will present your opinion about a topic — along with support for that opinion — so that your reader sees something of the process you went through to reach your judgment. You must establish criteria to effectively support your evaluation. For example, if you are writing an essay to evaluate the Toyota Prius as an effective automobile, you must first establish the general characteristics of a good car.

Personal

Your goal in a *personal* essay is to structure your thoughts so that your reader can experience what you have experienced. Personal essays provide you with an opportunity to hone your narrative and descriptive skills.

Exposition

Exposition is a type of oral or written discourse that is used to explain, describe, or inform. The writer of an expository essay cannot assume that the reader has prior knowledge or prior understanding of the topic discussed. When you read a non-fiction book, magazine, or newspaper article, the author is using expository writing to inform you — the reader — about the topic.

Narrative

When you write a narrative essay, you are telling a story. Narrative essays are told from a defined point of view — usually the author's. Narrative essays should contain all the conventions of storytelling: plot, character, setting, climax, and ending. Carefully select details to explain, support, or embellish your story.

Descriptive

The primary purpose of descriptive writing is to describe a person, place, or event in a way that allows your perspective to be experienced by your reader. Use vivid details to paint a complete picture for your reader.

Information on this handout borrowed from:

The Longwood Guide to Writing (Second Edition) by Ronald F. Lunsford and Bill Bridges.

The Scott Foresman Handbook for Writers (Eighth Edition) by John Ruszkiewicz, Christy Friend, and Maxine Hairston.

The Little, Brown Handbook (Fourth Edition) by H. Ramsey Fowler and Jane E. Aaron.