

Expository Essay:

The purpose of the expository essay is to explain a topic in a logical and straightforward manner. Without bells and whistles, expository essays present a fair and balanced analysis of a subject based on facts—with no references to the writer’s opinions or emotions.

Expository Essay Structure

Usually, the expository essay is composed of five paragraphs. The introductory paragraph contains the thesis or main idea. The next three paragraphs, or body of the essay, provide details in support of the thesis. The concluding paragraph restates the main idea and ties together the major points of essay.

Here are expository essay tips for each part of the essay structure and writing process:

1. Prewriting for the Expository Essay

In the prewriting phase of writing an expository essay, students should take time to brainstorm about the topic and main idea. Next, do research and take notes. Create an outline showing the information to be presented in each paragraph, organized in a logical sequence.

2. Drafting the Expository Essay

When creating the initial draft of an expository essay, consider the following suggestions:

- The most important sentence in the introductory paragraph is the topic sentence, which states the thesis or main idea of the essay. The thesis should be clearly stated without giving an opinion or taking a position. A good thesis is well defined, with a manageable scope that can be adequately addressed within a five-paragraph essay. (This should be the last sentence in your introduction)
- Each of the three body paragraphs should cover a separate point that develops the essay’s thesis. The sentences of each paragraph should offer facts and examples in support of the paragraph’s topic.
- The concluding paragraph should reinforce the thesis and the main supporting ideas. Do not introduce new material in the conclusion.
- Since an expository essay discusses an event, situation, or the views of others, and not a personal experience, students should write in the third person (“he,” “she,” or “it”), and avoid “I” or “you” sentences.

3. Revising the Expository Essay

In the revision phase, students review, modify, and reorganize their work with the goal of making it the best it can be. Keep these considerations in mind:

- Does the essay give an unbiased analysis that unfolds logically, using relevant facts and examples?
- Has the information been clearly and effectively communicated to the reader?
- Watch out for “paragraph sprawl,” which occurs when the writer loses focus and veers from the topic by introducing unnecessary details.
- Is the sentence structure varied? Is the word choice precise?
- Do the transitions between sentences and paragraphs help the reader’s understanding?
- Does the concluding paragraph communicate the value and meaning of the thesis and key supporting ideas?

If the essay is still missing the mark, take another look at the thesis. A solid thesis statement leads to a solid essay. Once the thesis works, the rest of the essay falls into place more easily.

4. Editing the Expository Essay

Next, proofread and correct errors in grammar and mechanics, and edit to improve style and clarity. While an expository essay should be clear and concise, it can also be lively and engaging. Having a friend read the essay helps writers edit with a fresh perspective.