

Types of Essays

(based on concepts and information in *Successful College Writing* by Kathleen McWhorter, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009)

	<i>features of essay type</i>	<i>tips for constructing essay type</i>
Narrative Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Narrative essay presents a detailed account of an event or series of events -- using dialogue, physical description, and/or by recounting action • A Narrative essay presents a conflict and create tension • A Narrative essay sequences events • A Narrative essay uses dialogue • A Narrative essay is often told from 1st person point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Narrative essay is constructed with an introduction that provides background, setting, introduction to conflict, and thesis • A Narrative essay relates a sequence of events with rising tension; last event leads to the climax • A Narrative essay has a conclusion that offers a resolution, final impression, or statement of or reference to thesis
Descriptive Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Descriptive essay uses sensory details to convey information • A Descriptive essay uses active verbs and varied sentences • A Descriptive essay creates a dominant impression, such as anger, humor, awe, inspiration, or fear • A Descriptive essay uses connotative language effectively • A Descriptive essay uses comparisons (metaphors, similes, personifications, analogies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Descriptive essay has a thesis • A Descriptive essay is constructed with a sense of organization -- spatial order, chronological order, most-to-least important, or least-to-most important • A Descriptive essay is constructed with a point of emphasis, such as usefulness, value, beauty, or some other special feature
Illustration Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Illustration essay uses examples to show the essential elements of a topic or to reinforce a thesis • An Illustration essay can be used to support a generalization • An Illustration essay can explain or clarify a topic or concept • An Illustration essay relies on carefully selected examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Illustration essay is constructed with a thesis • An Illustration essay is constructed with a sense of organization -- spatial order, chronological order, most-to-least important, or least-to-most important • An Illustration essay may be organized as a comparison/contrast or cause-and-effect essay
Process Analysis Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Process Analysis essay explains how something works OR how to do something • A Process Analysis essay provides background information to help readers understand the importance or value of the process • A Process Analysis essay anticipates trouble spots in the process and offers solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Process Analysis essay has an explicit thesis statement • A Process Analysis essay is usually organized chronologically, although there may be situations that warrant construction from a least-to-most important manner • A Process Analysis essay is constructed with lots of details
Cause-and-Effect Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Cause-and-Effect essay may focus on causes, effects or both • A Cause-and-Effect essay relies on a clear thesis statement • A Cause-and-Effect essay can reinforce or challenge readers' assumptions about a topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Cause-and-Effect essay should be organized from least-to-most important, most-to-least important, chronological order, or other logical style • A Cause-and-Effect essay analyzes each cause and/or effect with great detail

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Classification or Division Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Classification or Division essay has an explicit thesis statement • A Classification essay groups ideas • A Division essay divides ideas • A Classification or Division essay focuses on a single principle • A Classification essay is constructed with exclusive, comprehensive categories • A Division essay is constructed with exclusive, comprehensive parts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Classification or Division essay explains each category or part with lots of details • A Classification or Division essay can be constructed from least-to-most important, most-to-least important, chronological order, social order, geographical order, spatial order or other comparative order forms
Definition Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Definition essay explains an idea according to its meaning or its relationship to other words of similar meaning • A Definition essay relies on extended definition to examine a topic • A Definition essay may use negation (something is or isn't) • A Definition essay may address misconceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Definition essay is usually constructed using another form of essay, such as a narrative, illustrative, argumentative, descriptive or cause-and-effect • A Definition essay provides clarification by focusing on a very specific term
Comparison-Contrast Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Comparison-Contrast essay considers similarities or differences, or both • A Comparison-Contrast essay has a clear purpose • A Comparison-Contrast essay clearly states the method by which the comparison or contrast will be done • A Comparison-Contrast essay needs to have plenty of details and features of the characteristics to be analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Comparison-Contrast essay can be presented with point-by-point organization, moving back and forth between two subjects to compare key points or characteristics • A Comparison-Contrast essay can be organized with subject-by-subject organization, presenting all of the points of one subject and then presenting all of the points of a second subject
Argument (or Argumentative) Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Argument essay presents and defends a debatable claim or thesis about an issue that is usually controversial • An Argument essay relies on support that shows the reader that the claim is valid; this support includes logic and reason, factual evidence and emotional appeals • An Argument essay is more persuasive by the use of logical reasoning and evidence than it is by the use of emotional appeals • An Argument essay includes a refutation or counterargument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Argument essay is constructed with a debatable thesis statement rather than a factual or summary statement • An Argument essay should include the writer's own ideas and researched, documented evidence; these elements should be synthesized to create an original argument or claim • An Argument essay should include background information about the controversial idea so that the reader understands why the writer's claim is important • An Argument essay is written in 3rd person point of view

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Rhetorical Analysis Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Rhetorical Analysis essay explores the logical, emotional and ethical appeals in a work of literature, news article, artwork, song, or other artistic or literary work • A Rhetorical Analysis essay provides background information about the author, the author's purpose and the presumed audience of the work • A Rhetorical Analysis essay analyzes word choice, reasoning, language, style, structure and voice/tone • A Rhetorical Analysis essay includes the writer's own ideas and quotes from the work being analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Rhetorical Analysis essay must have a clear thesis statement • A Rhetorical Analysis essay is often written to help a reader understand the significance of a specific work • A Rhetorical Analysis essay is written in the 3rd person point of view
Literary Analysis Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Literary Analysis essay presents and defends a debatable claim about a work of literature or a literary concept • A Literary Analysis essay is based on a blend of the writer's own ideas, researched evidence and the writer's interpretation of the researched evidence • A Literary Analysis essay may use other essay forms, such as comparison-contrast or cause and effect, to make its point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Literary Analysis essay must have a clear thesis statement • A Literary Analysis essay needs background information about the work of literature or the literary concept that will be analyzed • A Literary Analysis essay has a refutation or counterargument • A Literary Analysis essay is written in 3rd person point of view
Reflection Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Reflection essay is usually written in the 1st person point of view • A Reflection essay includes analysis of a literary work or other topic and the writer's interpretations and expression of ideas about the work that is analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Reflection essay does not require research • A Reflection essay can be organized in the form of any of several essay styles, such as comparison-contrast, cause-and-effect, narrative, illustrative or descriptive • A Reflection essay features the writer's personal opinion
Synthesis Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Synthesis essay is any essay based on information from more than one source that creates a new idea, theory, claim or thesis about information in the sources • A Synthesis essay is analytical and evaluative, interpreting information as it relates to the new idea or claim • A Synthesis essay relies on support that shows the reader that the claim is valid; this support includes logic and reason, factual evidence and emotional appeals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Synthesis essay can be organized in the form of any of several essay styles, such as comparison-contrast, cause-and-effect, narrative, illustrative, argument or descriptive • A Synthesis essay should include the writer's own ideas and researched, documented evidence; these elements should be synthesized to create an original argument or claim • A Synthesis essay should include background information about the controversial idea so that the reader understands why the writer's claim is important • A Synthesis essay is typically written in 3rd person point of view