

## **Expository Essays**

**By Walter S. Zapotoczny**

Expository essays can give solutions to day-to-day problems, like how to oil a screen door, or they can address more complex issues, like replacing fuel rods in a nuclear reactor. Expository essays can describe or explain a process or application, argue a particular point, examine the cause and effect of an event, classify large amounts of information, or compare and contrast differing viewpoints.

### **Describing and Explaining a Process**

This type of expository essay begins by introducing a process, stating its importance and giving an overview of the steps. Next, it describes each step clearly, usually in separate paragraphs, and links the steps with transition words (e.g., first, second, next, finally, while). The essay describes the outcome of the process and its importance. The writer closes by describing the process as a whole, and restating key points.

### **Arguing a Point**

This type of expository essay is meant to be positive and productive. It is an opportunity to debate controversial issue, to arrive at logical conclusions and perhaps to achieve agreement. The argumentative essay enlightens readers, helping them make an informed decision about an issue.

### **Describing Cause and Effect**

In a cause-and-effect essay, the writer develops a thesis or theory that is used to explain an event. The essay analyzes and explains the causes, the effects or both aspects of a phenomenon, fact, occurrence or circumstance.

### **Classifying Information**

A writer uses this type of expository essay as a means to make sense of a large or complex set of information. The writer presents the overall topic and then breaks it down into components that can be sorted into clearly distinguishable subgroups.

### **Comparing and Contrasting**

The writer's goal with this type of expository essay is to set two or more subjects side-by-side in order to evaluate them. The writer shows the reader how these two things are similar and different and, finally, draws conclusions or presents an evaluation of the objects under consideration.

### **Writing Process**

Regardless of the type of expository essay you are writing, there common steps to follow. You must select a topic, review and analyze the problem, research as needed, organize information, draft the document, revise the writing, test the writing, get feedback, edit the writing and publish the essay.

### **References**

*Manual for Writers of Term Papers, 6th Ed.*; Kate L. Turabian; 1996  
*The Elements of Style, 4th Ed.*; William Strunk, Jr., E. B. White; 1999