Types of Essays

There are many kinds of essays. Below are some of the most common types: narrative, description, process, comparison/contrast, argumentative/persuasive, classification/division, example, definition, cause/effect, and analyzing literature. Each type has a specific function.

❖ Narrative Essays

NARRATIVES are essays that tell a story. If the author is involved in the story, it is called a personal narrative. Like all writing, narratives should have a purpose. Normally, narratives have the dual purpose of entertaining the reader and teaching a lesson.

Organization:

1. In the introduction, the author states the subject and relates the purpose in the thesis statement. Also included in the introduction should be any necessary information leading up to the beginning of the story itself.

2. The body of the narrative should be the actual telling of the story. It should include all major details told in chronological order (the order in which the events occurred).

3. The conclusion of the narrative should restate the thesis statement and should offer suggestions to the reader about how to experience or avoid the situation that occurred in the story. Often, morals are used here to help teach a lesson about life.

NOTE: If you are writing a personal narrative, it is perfectly acceptable to use the word "I." After all, it is a story about you.
Description Essays

DESCRIPTION is writing in which all or some of the senses are used to help the reader imagine the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and/or feel of the subject. Using specific adjectives, adverbs, and verbs helps to create better images for the reader.

Organization:

1. The introduction should include a thesis statement that reveals the topic and the writer's attitude toward it.

2. The body should include the actual description of the subject. Spatial order (describing the relationship in the order of location, for example, moving from left to right or top to bottom, etc.) is the most commonly used order for descriptive essays.

3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and end on a general note related to the topic.

Process Essays

PROCESS ESSAYS explain how something is done, how something works, or how to make something.

Organization:

1. The introduction of a process paper should introduce the subject and should also give a reason for the sharing of this information (why is the audience interested in learning about this?).

2. The body of the process paper should list chronologically (what first? What second? And so on…) all of the steps required to successfully complete the process. Make certain that no necessary steps are omitted.

3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and offer some further suggestions about implementing the process.
**Comparison/Contrast Essays**

COMPARISON/CONTRAST essays compare two things to show how they are alike or contrast two things to show how they are different. Often, the word "compare" is used to mean both compare and contrast. Essays can be just comparison, just contrast, or both comparison and contrast.

**Organization:**

1. The introduction of a comparison/contrast essay should introduce the two elements being compared and/or contrasted. It should also give a reason for the comparison and/or contrast. In other words, why does the reader want or need to know why the two subjects are alike and/or different?

2. The body of the comparison/contrast essay should provide details that support the thesis statement. Be sure to give equal time to each subject. For example, if you are comparing or contrasting two countries, make sure that if you discuss the government of one country that you also discuss the government of the other country.

**NOTE:** There are two different methods of presenting material in a comparison/contrast essay. One is to discuss everything about one subject and then everything about the second one (block method). The second method is to discuss one point about each subject and then a second point about both, etc. (point by point method).

3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and end on a general note related to the topic.
Argumentative/Persuasive Essays

ARGUMENTATIVE AND PERSUASIVE essays are directed at a specific audience and are meant to change that audience's opinion about a particular subject. Argumentative essays normally involve some documented research; persuasive essays generally do not. Thus, argumentative essays are more powerful than persuasive essays.

Organization:

1. The introduction should introduce the topic and the position held on the topic (either directly or indirectly), and your major reasons for support. Some other elements such as anecdotes, statistics, background information or other attention getters should also be used to help support your position and to interest the reader.

2. The body should include evidence that helps support your view. Major points should be made and backed up. It is also important to address and refute any major arguments of the other side (generally, this is done in the first body paragraph). Be careful not to use any faulty reasoning when drawing conclusions.

Classification/Division Essays

CLASSIFICATION-DIVISION essays are concerned with putting things into specific categories. To classify means to place something into a larger group to which it belongs; whereas, to divide means to break it down and show what makes it fit into that class. Often classification and division are used in conjunction to help show the relationship of the topic to something else.

Organization:

1. The introduction should introduce the topic and the characteristics by which it will be classified and divided. A reason for the need to classify and divide the subject might also be given.

2. The body of the classification essay should include examples of the divisions and examples of what makes something fit into a specific category.

3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and end on a general note related to the topic.
❖ Example Essays

**EXAMPLE** essays simply use examples to help illustrate a point. The more specific examples that are used, the better the essay will be.

**Organization:**

1. The introduction should include a thesis statement that makes a statement that can be supported with examples.
2. The body should include supporting examples that can be broken down into more specific examples.
3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and end on a general note related to the topic.

❖ Definition Essays

**DEFINITION** essays use various methods in order to help explain what a term means. Definition can be presented through examples, description, comparison/contrast, or negation (telling what something is not). Either one method or a combination of methods can be used to help define a term. Sometimes when defining a term, it is important to consider not only the denotation (dictionary definition), but also the connotation of the word (the feelings associated with the word).

**Organization:**

1. The introduction should name the term to be defined and give an explanation for defining it.
2. Methods of defining either in combination or individually should be used to help the reader understand the term in the body of the paper.
3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and end on a general note related to the topic.
**Cause/Effect Essays**

**CAUSE/EFFECT** essays show the reasons that something happens and the results of its occurrence.

**Organization:**

1. The introduction should include a thesis statement introducing the topic and indicating that the topic has specific causes and produces specific effects.

2. The body should give specific examples of the causes and effects related to the topic. Generally, the causes are discussed first followed by the effects.

3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and possibly offer suggestions to avoid or to produce similar future experiences (depending on whether the effects are bad or good).

**Analyzing Literature in Essays**

An **ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE** essay attempts to explain some aspect of a novel, poem, short story, etc. It could be a character analysis, a theme analysis, a comparison/contrast, or classification. The writer could also use the historical approach, the biographical approach, or show how the work uses some literary device (satire, irony, symbolism, etc.).

**Organization:**

1. In the introduction in addition to a thesis statement that indicates what type of analysis will be written, there should also be included the author's full name and title of the work being analyzed. An overall review of the story may also be helpful.

2. The body should include examples from the story that support the thesis statement. **DO NOT SIMPLY GIVE A PLOT SUMMARY; THAT IS A REPORT, NOT AN ANALYSIS.**

3. The conclusion should restate the thesis statement and end on a general note related to the topic.