

Expository Writing By Francesca Gacho

What is Expository Writing?

Expository writing is a genre of writing that describes, explains, or investigates an idea, reason, or steps in order to inform or illuminate a particular subject for the reader (Baker, Brizee, & Angeli). Like all kinds of academic writing, expository essays have a clear thesis statement that is supported by sound evidence and reasoning.

Expository essays take the following forms (but are not limited to): definition, process, cause-and-effect, or pros-and-cons (opposing sides). Successful and effective expository essays should provide necessary context and background information, present a main idea, and provide examples to elaborate on the subject at hand.

What kinds of assignments require expository writing?

Though assignments in graduate school may vary, many essays require—in some form—expository writing. As with any assignment, you should consult the assignment guide or prompt provided by your instructor to ensure that you are meeting specific requirements.

Some examples of writing assignments that might require expository writing include:

- *Definition* and *description* of an idea, concept, or theory and *demonstrating* its application
- *Discussion* or *description* of a process
- *Explanation* or *analysis* of cause and effect
- *Comparison* of elements, approaches, models, objects, topics, etc.
- *Description* of background or contextual information to explain a historical event, phenomenon, market trend, etc.

Approaches to Expository Writing

As with any scholarly, academic writing, sound research should be done to fully explore your topic. An awareness of the writer's rhetorical situation—that is, the circumstances around which the text is written and expected to be read—is a vital step in approaching any writing project. The circumstances may include intended or imagined audience, purpose of the essay or writing project, context of the essay, and register (level of formality or informality of the assignment), among others. Always check the requirements for your assignment to make sure you are addressing the prompt or meeting the expectations of the task.

Examples of Expository Writing

The following are published articles from peer-reviewed journals that employ the genre of expository writing. (Login to Honnold Mudd Library account required.)

- [“Critical Zen Art History” by Gregory P.A. Levine](#)
- [“Broadband Access: Comparing Alternatives” by W. Pugh and G. Boyer](#)
- [“The Essence, Characteristics and Limitation of Post-Colonialism: From Karl Marx's Point of View” by Geng Yang, Qixue Zhang, and Qi Wang](#)

References

Baker, Jack, Allen Brizee, and Elizabeth Angeli, “Expository Essays.” *Owl Purdue*, <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/02/>