

TYPES OF ESSAY

This final packet is meant to last until the end of the term. Be sure to bring it to class for the remaining sessions.

I. NARRATION: **An account of something that happened; a story**

Narration has the following elements:

- Situation:** The background; the who, what, when, and where of the account.
Conflict: The problem, friction, or issue at the heart of the story.
Struggle: What happened? The struggle adds action and develops the plot.
Outcome: Result of the struggle; the resolution.
Meaning: Lessons learned; the “moral of the story.”

Use:

- **Description techniques** (see Descriptive Writing, below)
- **Dialogue** (What people said, in quotation marks, using quotation indicators like He said, She said, etc.)
- **Transitional words**, like *Then, Soon, Later, On the other hand, For example, etc.*
 - **But, avoid:** I did this; then I did that. Then, we did this. Then we did that. Next, we did this.
→ *too boring!*
- **Verb tense**
 - Should usually be the **past tense**, even when recounting something that happened to you and telling the story as though the reader is with you at the time. **Pick a tense and stick with it!**
- **Point of View (POV)**
 - Will often be the **first person** (*I* did this; then *I* did that; it was *my* problem), but the writer may also be writing about someone else: (My father drove away; then *he* called my mother; *she* answered.)
 - May be **third person** if the writer is telling a story from a distance, for example, writing a biographical narrative about someone else.

For an example of a narrative essay, read “A & P,” by John Updike, on p. 319.

II. DESCRIPTION: **Specific detail & imagery making reader feel *present* in the moment**

- **Description should be present in any type of writing**, from narration to the others covered here.
- Think about the **dominant impression** you want to give; don’t attempt to describe every single thing.
- Use **imagery** to put your reader right there with you.
- **Order events** in time and space in such a way that the reader can imagine the location and time easily.

BE SPECIFIC!

Instead of: I got home and put my books down on the couch. Then, I ate some food.

Try: After throwing my dog-eared books on the dusty sofa, I settled down to a snack of crisp, yellow corn chips accompanied by spicy tomato salsa spilling over the top of an earthen-ware bowl.

BE INTERESTING!

Instead of: After my mom yelled at me, I was sad and mad. I wanted to yell back, but I knew I'd get in bad trouble. So, I hid in my closet and cried.

Try: "Get the hell out of here, you brat!" my mother would yell. I felt hollow inside, like a pumpkin with the seeds scooped out, and as mad as a raging bull. I wanted so badly to yell back at her, but, knowing the consequences would be unspeakable, I curled up in the corner of my dark, quiet closet and cried.

AVOID SWEEPING GENERALIZATIONS! Use specific examples that you can back up -- or write with moderation.

Instead of: People all around the world have hated animal abuse and will do so for all time.

Try: City records reveal that many citizens are quick to call the police if they hear of an animal being abused. I'm not surprised, because I've done this myself. I hope it will be a long time before people become too complacent to report such injustices to our fellow living creatures.

AVOID BEING JUDGMENTAL! Provide specific examples and details instead; let readers draw their own conclusions.

Instead of: The kid acted like a great big jerk. He was so racist. I thought he'd never shut up.

Try: Martin frequently referred to fellow classmates behind their back as "Nigger" or "Spic," often rolling his eyes in derision. He made such remarks whenever he could and gave no sign of slowing down anytime soon.

USE ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS!

Instead of: It was hot. In the afternoon, we rested on a log before hiking further into the woods.

Try: Once the afternoon sun began to blaze down upon us, exhaustion set in, and we collapsed on a nearby moss-covered log, groaning under the weight of its ancient branches. Our hike into the heart of the forest would soon resume.

USE A THESAURUS!

Instead of:	old	try:	elderly, aged, long in the tooth
	clean	try:	spotless, hygienic, sterile
	good	try:	marvelous, wonderful, incomparable, unrivaled
	bad	try:	dreadful, horrific, appalling, ghastly

For an example of a descriptive essay, read "A & P," by John Updike, on p. 319.

III. CAUSE AND EFFECT: For discussing relationship, reasons, and how one thing led to another

Use this approach of indicating the situation and identifying the causes and effects; then develop all three:

CAUSES	SITUATION	EFFECTS
Poor habits learned in school →	Procrastination in College	→ Poor college grades
No support from parents →		→ Poor letters of recommendation
Family poor; always had to work →		→ Repeated failure in college
Moved a lot (different schools) →		→ Never taking responsibility for self
Friends not into school →		→ Inability to get decent job
Constant failure in K-12 →		→ Looked down on by family & friends
Uncaring teachers →		→ Feeling of hopelessness

1. **To practice this**, examine and discuss the picture on p. 380.
2. **For an example** of a cause-and-effect essay, read “Study Says Flirtatious Women Get Fewer Raises,” by Del Jones, on p. 385, and “My Dad, the Bank Robber,” by Louis Crissman, on p. 392.
3. **Write:**

Use listing or any other prewriting technique to develop a **two-page cause-and-effect essay**, using as much descriptive language as possible, on the following topic:

Explain how a life trauma or other life change appearing on the table on p. 384 can spill over into other areas and have effects there, which in turn may move to other areas. Try to personalize your discussion by using an example from your own life. Discuss whether the table seems accurate to you or not.

IV. COMPARE AND CONTRAST: For comparing two or more subjects, concepts, ideas, etc.

Use the Four P's:

Purpose:

- Are you trying to compare two (or more) subjects, showing how they are *similar* or *dissimilar*?
 - If so, contrast the two items on a subject-by-subject or a point-by-point basis (see below)

or

- Are you trying to prove that one side is *better* (ranking)?
 - If so, as you contrast the two subjects, discuss pros and cons and make a case (*provide evidence!*) for why one is “better” than the other.

Points:

- Identify the points you are going to compare the two subjects across. Use prewriting (like clustering) for this.
 - For example, when comparing the two subjects **sorbet** and **ice cream**, you may want to compare them across these points: texture, caloric content, richness, flavor options, fullness of taste, cost, etc.

Pattern:

You can compare two items on a **point-by-point basis**. In this example, points are texture, caloric content, etc.:

Subject	Sorbet	Ice Cream
Points		
Texture		
Caloric Content		
Richness		
Flavor Options		
Fullness of Taste		
Cost		

Or

You can compare the items on a **subject-by-subject basis**. In this example, the subjects are **type of frozen dessert**:

Points	Texture	Caloric Content	Richness	Flavor Options	Fullness of Taste	Cost
Subject						
Sorbet						
Ice Cream						

Presentation:

The pattern you decide upon determines how your outline will be set up. For example, the subject-by-subject outline might look like this (one point is broken down into further details as an example of a detailed outline):

- I. Sorbet
 - A. Texture
 - B. Caloric Content
 - C. Richness
 - D. Flavor Options
 - 1. fruits
 - a. berries
 - i. strawberry
 - ii. blueberry
 - E. Fullness of Taste
 - F. Cost
- II. Ice Cream
 - A. Texture
 - B. Caloric Content
 - C. Richness
 - D. Flavor Options
 - E. Fullness of Taste
 - F. Cost

1. **To practice this**, examine and discuss the picture on p. 401.
2. **For an example** of a contrast-and-compare essay, read “A Mixed Tex-Cal Marriage,” by José Antonio Burciaga, on p. 407, and “Chinese Parents and American Parents,” by Charles Yang, on p. 410.
3. **Write:**

Use clustering or any other prewriting technique to develop a **two-page compare-and-contrast essay**, using as much descriptive language as possible, on the following topic:

Contrast and compare what it's like to be a student either in high school versus college or in another country versus the United States. Be as thorough as you can, ensuring that the reader understands both school environments without necessarily having been there. Which one do you think has more overall value? Why?

V. THE ARGUMENTATIVE OR PERSUASIVE ESSAY: **For arguing & supporting your position**

Essay Parts:

1. **Background:** **historical & social context** of a controversial issue
 2. **Proposition:** your **thesis statement**; what you will argue, including a roadmap of *how* you will argue it
 3. **Qualifications:** any **limitations** to your argument; for example, you may be opposed to abortion, except in cases of rape or the health of the mother
 4. **Refutation:** identification of the **opposing position** and its flaws (provide evidence!)
 5. **Support:** your **reasoning, facts, examples, statistics, opinions** of authorities, and other **evidence** to make your case
 6. **Conclusion:** come full circle, with a conclusion that restates your thesis and shows how you have made your case, summarizing the most important points you made
1. **To practice this**, examine and discuss the picture on p. 442.
 2. **For an example** of an argumentative essay, read “Should Teachers Let Failing Students Pass by Doing an ‘Extra Credit’ Assignment?,” by Julie Barlow, on p. 451, and “Just Say No to Extra Credit for Rescuing Failing Students,” by Carla Estrada, on p. 452.
 3. **Write:**

Use clustering or any other prewriting technique to develop a **two-page argumentative essay**, using as much compelling evidence and detail as possible, to *make a case for or against extra credit work for failing students. Use examples from your own experience, and refer to and quote from both essays.*