



### The Four Main Types of Essays

1. **The Expository Essay** (explanation) - describes or explains a topic. For example, an essay entitled "The Care and Maintenance of a Bicycle" would be an expository essay.
2. **The Narrative Essay** (recounting) - uses a single well told story as the basis for drawing a conclusion or making a statement of opinion. For example "My Most Exciting Bicycle Adventure" would be a narrative essay.
3. **The Argumentative Essay** presents a reasoned series of arguments in support of a position. For example, an essay entitled "Cars or Scooters: Which is the Most Effective Method of Transportation?" would be an argumentative essay.
4. **The Persuasive Essay** combines reasoned arguments with the emotion required to persuade the reader to take action. For example, an essay entitled "Save the Ozone and Stimulate your Heart: Leave Your Car at Home and Bicycle" would be a persuasive essay.

### Other Types of Essays

1. **The Evaluative Essay** is basically a review based on observations about a book, story, poem, or play in which the writer merely evaluates the quality of a given piece of literature.
2. **The 'Cause - Effect' Essay** includes some elements of writing that might be considered more professional than those a descriptive or narrative essay might include. It is very important, for instance, that your tone be reasonable, and that your presentation be factual and believable. Sources are often required in a *cause/effect paper*, and your choice of these sources is important as they reflect on the validity of your paper.

3. **The Literary Essay.** In the literary essay, you are exploring the meaning and construction of a piece of literature. This task is more complicated than reviewing, though the two are similarly evaluative. In a review you are discussing the overall effect and validity of written work, while in a literary essay you are paying more attention to specifics. A literary essay focuses on such elements as structure, character, theme, style, tone, and subtext. You are taking a piece of writing and trying to discover how and why it is put together the way it is. You must adopt a viewpoint on the work in question and show how the details of the work support your viewpoint. A literary essay may be your own interpretation, based only on your reading of the piece, or it may be a mixture of your opinions and references to the criticism of others, much like a research paper. Again, be wary of plagiarism and of letting the opinions of more experienced writers swamp your own response to the work. If you are going to consult the critics, you should reread the literary work you are discussing and make some notes on it before looking at any criticism.
  
4. **The Informal Essay.** The informal essay is written mainly for enjoyment. This is not to say that it cannot be informative or persuasive; however, it is less a formal statement than a relaxed expression of opinion, observation, humor or pleasure. A good informal essay has a relaxed style but retains a strong structure, though that structure may be less rigid than in a formal paper. The informal essay tends to be more personal than the formal, even though both may express subjective opinions. In a formal essay the writer is a silent presence behind the words, while in an informal essay the writer is speaking directly to the reader in a conversational style. If you are writing informally, try to maintain a sense of your own personality. Do not worry about sounding academic, but avoid sloppiness.