

It is important to create your résumé in a way that employers will understand. Creating an effective résumé for your civilian life means you will have to use language people outside the military can understand. For example, in the experience section of your résumé you will need to do some “translating” between military terms and civilian terms:

Military terms: *Received and stored bulk and package petroleum, oils, and lubricants products. Issued and dispensed bulk fuels and water from storage and distribution facilities to using units. Selected and submitted samples of petroleum, oils, and lubricants to laboratory for testing. Performed petroleum and water accounting duties* (from Army Pamphlet 611-21).

Civilian terms: *Coordinated and distributed petroleum products and monitored quality control systems.*

If you remember specific details and achievements related to your responsibilities in the military, you should include them:

Coordinated and distributed \$1 million in petroleum products per month and monitored quality control systems to ensure a 99.3% average delivery rate.

- [Résumé overview part 2](#)
 - What should I do if I am transitioning from the automotive industry?
 - What should I do about time I was not working?
 - What should I do if I have been incarcerated?
 - What should my résumé look like?
 - What should my résumé include?

Résumé Overview Part 2

This resource was written by **Allen Brizee**.

Last edited by **Allen Brizee** on July 31, 2009 .

Summary:

This resource will explain steps you can take to write a successful résumé if you are transition from the automotive industry. This resource also covers steps you can take to explain time you were not working or time you might have been incarcerated. Lastly, this resource covers what your résumé should look like and what it should include.

What should I do if I am transitioning from the automotive industry?

It is important to create your résumé in a way that employers will understand. Creating an effective résumé for your new job outside the auto industry means you will have to use language people outside the industry can understand. For example, in the experience

section of your résumé you will need to “translate” your auto industry terms:

Auto industry terms: *Finished, prepared, and applied various materials, sub-finishes and final top coat paints to components, parts and complete vehicles in accordance with engineering drawings and manufacturer’s recommendations.*

“Translated” terms: *Worked in a team to apply paint to parts and complete vehicles following detailed engineering drawings and manufacturer’s recommendations.*

If you remember specific details and achievements related to your responsibilities, you should include them:

Supervised and coordinated ten employees in automotive assembly and reviewed manufacturing processes and products for quality control. Maintained a 96% average delivery rate while focusing on lean manufacturing and continuous improvement.

What should I do about any times I was not working?

Short times in between jobs or work experience should not hurt your chances of getting an interview. But you should be prepared to talk about those breaks when you meet with the employer. If you were not working for pay but volunteered doing something in the community, talk about that experience to show you were busy doing something.

What should I do if I have been incarcerated?

If you were incarcerated, be honest with the employer and talk about what you did while you were serving your sentence that may contribute to your job skills. For example, many prison systems offer General Education Development (GED) programs so inmates can receive the equivalent of a high school diploma. Prison systems also offer vocational training in carpentry, plumbing, electronics, auto mechanics, etc. If you have received vocational training in prison, talk about this in your interview.

Also, people reentering the work force from prison may want to write a skills-based (also called a functional) résumé. Skills-based résumés focus on what you can do now rather than showing a specific work history.

What should my résumé look like?

You may design your résumé in a chronological format or a skills-based format. You may also use a combination of both. You should choose the format that best represents your situation. As mentioned above, if you have been incarcerated, you may want to choose the skills-based format. The example résumés available with this resource show all of these formats. Regardless of which format you choose, your résumé should follow some general guidelines.

Your résumé should be one page, and it should look professional. Your résumé should be easy to read and have no errors. Your résumé should not contain full sentences, but instead it should contain statements in bullet lists. Lastly, your résumé should include white space and a balanced format so it is easy to skim. For more information about résumé formatting, visit the [Résumé Design](#) pages.

What should my résumé include?

Depending on which résumé format you choose (chronological, skills-based, combination), your résumé could include these sections:

- Contact information – phone number (home, cell), mailing address, email address
- Objective – the name of the company and the job you want
- Work history – jobs you have held (the order of the work history and education sections can be reversed depending on your situation)
- Education – elementary, high school, college, technical school, certifications, vocational or trade schools
- Summary of qualifications – list of skills that apply to the job you want

Optional sections include:

- Professional or union affiliations – trade groups or labor relation organizations
- Other experiences – volunteer work or hobbies that relate to the job you want

You may also do a separate page for your references. References are past employers or people you know who employers can contact to get more information about your job history.

[Click here](#) to download the PDF file containing sample résumés and employment letters.

The following pages explain each résumé section in detail.

- [Résumé sections part 1](#)
 - Contact information
 - Objective
 - Work experience

[Résumé Sections Part 1](#)

This resource was written by **Allen Brizee**.

Last edited by **Allen Brizee** on April 5, 2012 .

Summary:

This resource explains how to write the following résumé sections: contact information, objective, and work experience.

Contact Information

The contact information section is at the top of your résumé and includes your name, mailing address, and phone number(s). If you have an email account, provide that address here. Note that your email address should be professional. In other words, an email address that reads *hotchick @ yahoo.com* is **not** acceptable. Here is a sample contact information section:

Karl M. Jones
900 N. 7th St. Apt. 6
Lafayette, IN 47904
765-123-4567
kmjones123 @ gmail.com

Objective

The objective should be short and tailored to the company and the job you want. The objective should include the company name and the job title. The objective should also include any job number in the ad. Here is a sample objective:

Objective: To obtain the welder apprentice position (#46) at A & D Industries

Work Experience

Note: You can reverse the work experience and education sections depending on your situation. The work experience section lists your past jobs beginning with the most recent position. The section also includes:

- Name and address of company or organization
- Employment dates
- Position title
- Responsibilities (remember to list the number of employees you supervised if you have management experience)
- Awards and promotions (employers are very interested in your achievements and success. Awards and promotions show an employer that you have been recognized for your hard work)

Here is a sample work experience section:

Russell's Collision Service, Lafayette, IN: July 2007-Present

Part Time Auto Body Technician, Welder/Fabricator

- *Diagnose, weld, and repair automotive body damage*
- *Weld metal parts, components using brazing, gas, or arc equipment*
- *Weld in flat, horizontal, vertical, or overhead positions*
- *Prepare accurate cost estimates*
- *Match body parts*
- *Mix and apply paint from spray primer to final finish work*

Village Pantry, Lafayette, IN: June 2006-Present

Full and Part Time Retail Clerk

- *Run point of sales register*
- *Maintain customer relations*
- *Build merchandise displays*
- *Track inventory*
- *Stock shelves*
- *Won "Employee of the Month" May 2006, April 2008*

Village Pantry, Indianapolis, IN: April 2002-June 2006

Full Time Retail Clerk

- *Ran point of sales register*
- *Maintained customer relations*
- *Built merchandise displays*
- *Tracked inventory*
- *Stocked shelves*

The verbs you use in your bullet lists should be active and should be specific. The Purdue OWL maintains a list of action verbs you can use to help pick words to describe what you have done. [Click here](#) to read the Purdue OWL's list of action words for résumés.

Also, the tense of verbs in your bullet lists should be past tense for previous jobs: Ran point of sales register. Verbs should be present tense for jobs you currently hold: Run point of sales register. An exception to this is using a verb for something that happened in the past at your current job (from the example above: Won "Employee of the Month" May 2006, April 2008).

Lastly, make sure you use consistent construction in your bullet lists:

Not consistent

- Ran point of sales register
- Customer relations management
- Merchandise displays development
- Tracked inventory
- Shelf stock

Consistent

- Ran point of sales register
 - Maintained customer relations
 - Built merchandise displays
 - Tracked inventory
 - Stocked shelves
-
- [Résumé sections part 2](#)
 - Education
 - Summary of skills
 - References

Résumé Sections Part 2

This resource was written by **Allen Brizee**.

Last edited by **Allen Brizee** on July 31, 2009 .

Summary:

These pages explain how to write the following sections for your résumé: education, summary of skills, references.

Education

Note: You can reverse the education and work experience sections depending on your situation. The education section lists your highest degree, training, or certificate. The section also includes:

- School or training program name and location
- Graduation or certification date
- Level of degree and grade point average if it is 3.0 or above

If you did not finish a degree or program, list the dates you went to the school and any credits you earned. Here is a sample education section:

Ivy Tech Community College, Lafayette, IN, August 24, 2006 - May 9, 2008, 18 credits in Industrial Technology – Welding

Emmerich Manual High School, Indianapolis, IN, May 23, 2003, General Studies and Welding

Summary of Skills and Qualifications

The summary of skills and qualifications lists experience and skills you have. This section could follow your objective section, or it could follow your education section. You may also want to include any languages besides English you speak. Here is a sample summary of qualifications:

- *Seven years of experience working with customers (two years in welding)*
- *Skills in:*
 - *welding steel, aluminum, and stainless steel*
 - *hand and power tools*
 - *physical dexterity and ability to lift over 100 pounds*
- *Ability to:*
 - *diagnose problems and determine appropriate action*
 - *work successfully in high-stress situations*
 - *perform mathematics*
 - *read technical manuals and work orders, interpret and apply blueprints and schematic diagrams*
 - *write materials requests and accurately follow oral, written, and graphical instructions*
 - *maintain accurate records*
- *Knowledge of:*
 - *mechanical systems, fabrication, and welding*
 - *welding theory and principles*
 - *welding tools and welding codes*
 - *safety practices*

Willingness to learn as evidenced by continuing education in welding at Ivy Tech Community College

References

Some employers may not ask for references with your résumé. But it is good to have a references list ready if an employer requires it. Include at least three references. Also, remember to contact your references to double-check their contact information and to ask

permission to use them as references. Here is a sample references list:

*Russell Clark, Owner of Russell's Collision Services
1404 State Route 26, Lafayette, IN
765-789-1011*

*Rebecca Singh, Manager Village Pantry
3630 Greenbush St., Lafayette, IN
765-121-3141*

*Anthony Taylor, Manager Village Pantry
4004 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN
317-516-1718*

[Click here](#) to download the PDF file containing sample résumés and employment letters.

- [Résumé sections part 3](#)
 - Optional section - professional affiliations
 - Optional section - other experiences

Résumé Sections Part 3

This resource was written by **Allen Brizee**.

Last edited by **Allen Brizee** on July 31, 2009 .

Summary:

This resource explains how to write optional sections for your résumé, professional affiliations and other experiences.

These two sections are not required for résumés, but you may want to include them if you think it may help you get a job.

Professional Affiliations

The optional professional affiliations section could include your trade groups or labor organizations. This section could be located under objective. Here is a sample professional affiliation section:

United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada, Local 440, May 2009

American Welding Society, August 2006

Other Experiences

The other experiences section lists experiences other than work and school that relate to the job you want. The section should only be included in your résumé if you have room or if you think it will help you get a job. We have omitted this section in one of the sample résumés. The other experiences section can include volunteer work and hobbies related to your job. Here is a sample other experiences section:

Welded steel art and classic car restoration

[Click here](#) to download the PDF file containing sample résumés and employment letters.

- [Résumé design part 1](#)
 - Designing your résumé
 - Four-section Method (balancing your résumé)

Résumé Design Part 1

This resource was written by **Allen Brizee**.

Last edited by **Allen Brizee** on November 7, 2009 .

Summary:

These resources will help you design your résumé so it is easy to read and look professional.

Résumé Design

You might be asking, why is the design of my résumé so important? Or, if I have a lot of experience, why does my résumé have to look so good? The answer to these questions is simple: employers may rate your ability to do a job based on the content of your résumé and the appearance of your résumé.

Your résumé represents you, and if it looks unprofessional, then an employer might think you are unprofessional. In order to have the best chance to get a job, you want to seem as professional as possible. A professional looking résumé will help you do this.

Employers may only take a few seconds to look at your résumé before deciding to give you an interview or not. To make it past that initial review, you should design your résumé so that employers can read it quickly and easily.

One way to do this is to use the most common design for résumés so employers will know where to look for the information they need. Even though you may want to be different from everyone else applying for the job, you should allow the content of your résumé and your interview to set you apart. A good strategy to use to design a résumé is the four-

section (or quadrant) method.

The Four-Section (or Quadrant) Method

Most readers of English begin in the top left side of a page and work their way down in a Z pattern. So, you should design your résumé so that the most important information is at the top or top left of the page. Also, you should balance the text and the white space (empty space where there is no text). To ensure this balance, split up your résumé into four-sections, as seen below.



Each of your page sections should have an equal amount of text and white space. Readers typically begin in section 1 first, so you should put your most important information there. You may also center your name and contact information at the top of your résumé and safely assume that employers will begin there.

[Click here](#) to download the PDF file containing sample résumés and employment letters.

- [Résumé design part 2](#)
 - Using columns in your résumé
 - Résumé fonts
 - Other types of emphasis

Résumé Design Part 2

This resource was written by **Allen Brizee**.

Last edited by **Allen Brizee** on July 31, 2009 .

Summary:

This page will help you effectively use columns, fonts, and other types of emphasis in your résumé.

Using Columns in Your Résumé

Another way to create a balanced résumé is to use columns to format your text. Since you have a limited amount of space on your résumé page, do not use more than three columns. Here is an example of how to use columns to save space in your résumé for the summary of qualifications:

<i>Skills in</i>	<i>Ability to</i>	<i>Knowledge of</i>
<i>Welding steel, aluminum, stainless steel Hand and power tools Physical dexterity and ability to lift over 100 pounds</i>	<i>Diagnose problems and determine appropriate action Work in high-stress situations Perform basic mathematics Read blueprints and work orders Write materials requests, records</i>	<i>Mechanical systems, fabrications, and welding Welding theory and principles Welding tools and welding codes Safety procedures</i>

o create columns of text, use the Insert Table function in Microsoft Word.

Résumé Fonts

In order to make your résumé easy to read, you should use fonts to separate information. However, you do not want to make your résumé messy or too “busy” by using more than two kinds of fonts and font sizes. Also, you do not want to use fonts that are not professional. A good way to mix fonts is to use serif (which means feet in French) and sans-serif (which means no feet in French) fonts. Serifs are the short stems on the ends of the letters. Times New Roman is a serif font, while Arial is a sans-serif font. You can see the difference between some fonts in the image below:

<i>Sans Serif Fonts</i>	<i>Serif Fonts</i>
Arial Geneva Helvetica Charcoal	Times New Roman Garamond Palatino Courier

An effective mix of Times New Roman and Arial is to use Arial in the contact information section of your résumé and as the headings: Objective, Education, etc. Then you can use Times New Roman as the body text. Remember to be consistent, however, with your fonts. The sample résumés included with this resource shows examples of using Arial and Times New Roman together.

Other Types of Emphasis

In addition to using a good balance of text and white space and a good mix of fonts, you can use other types of emphasis in your résumé. You may also **bold** or *italicize* your text. Be careful not to mix too many types of emphasis, however. If you **bold**, and *italicize*, and **ALL CAP**, and **WORDS**, you make them more difficult to read rather than making them clearer: **Work Experience**.

- [Checking your résumé](#)
 - The twenty-second test for checking your résumé's effectiveness

Checking Your Résumé

This resource was written by **Allen Brizee**.

Last edited by **Allen Brizee** on July 31, 2009 .

Summary:

This resource will help you check your résumé.

The 20-Second Test

As mentioned on the previous page, employers may only spend a few seconds looking at your résumé before deciding whether or not to interview you. You should anticipate this and use the 20-second test to see if your résumé passes.

The 20-second test calls for you to have someone else read your résumé for twenty seconds. Then ask her how much she learned about you. If your reader noticed within twenty seconds what you want employers to learn about you, then most likely you will have designed an effective résumé.

You may also want to look at your résumé from a distance of a 12 inches or so. Turn it upside down or sideways. What do you notice? Are there large blocks of hard-to-read text? Does the résumé seem balanced, or is it “weighted” to one side or another? Is there too much white space in one area? Revise as necessary.

Lastly, always have a few different people read through your résumé in detail. Community centers, state, county, and city employment agencies can help you with this. Remember your résumé needs to be free of errors and designed with a professional appearance. Your résumé speaks for you when you cannot. You want your résumé to say good things to your potential employer so you can get the job you need.

[Click here](#) to download the PDF file containing sample résumés and employment letters.

References:

Job Search Tools: Resumes, Applications, and Cover Letters by Ronald C. Mendlin and Marc Polonsky with J. Michael Farr. The Putting the Bars Behind You Series. Indianapolis: JIST, 2000.

Some of this information is also adapted from Jobbankuse.com:
<http://www.jobbankusa.com>.

- [Academic Cover Letters](#)

Academic Cover Letters

Media File: [Academic Cover Letters](#)

This resource is enhanced by an Acrobat PDF file. [Download the free Acrobat Reader](#)

When you're applying for a faculty position with a college or university, the cover letter is your first chance to make a strong impression as a promising researcher and teacher. Below you'll find some strategies for presenting your qualifications effectively in an academic context.

Distinctions between Academic and Business Cover Letters

A cover letter for an academic job has a function similar to one for a business job, but the content differs significantly in quantity and kind. While the general advice for business cover letters—such as tailoring your letter for the specific job and selling your strengths—still applies, a cover letter for an academic position should be long enough to highlight in some detail your accomplishments during your graduate education in research, teaching, departmental service, and so on. The typical letter is thus usually one and a half to two pages long, but not more than two—roughly five to eight paragraphs.

The First Paragraph

In the opening of your letter you need to convey some basic information, such as what specific position you are applying for (using the title given in the job notice) and where you learned of the opening. Since a cover letter is a kind of persuasive writing (persuading a hiring committee to include you on a list of candidates for further review), the first paragraph of your letter should also make the initial claim as to why you are a strong candidate for the position.

Tailoring for Your Audience

In an academic context knowing your audience means reading the **job notice** carefully and knowing the **type of institution** to which you are applying. Most graduate students have studied a broad range of material within their discipline before specializing in a narrow field for the dissertation project. Since it is rare to find a job notice specifying your exact qualifications, you need to emphasize those aspects of your graduate training that seem particularly relevant to the position advertised.

- **Job notice:** If you've written a political science dissertation on populism in early twentieth-century US national politics, you probably won't respond to a notice seeking a specialist in international politics during the Cold War. But you may wish to apply for a position teaching twentieth-century US political parties and movements. In this case you would want to stress the relevance of your dissertation to the broad context of twentieth-century US politics, even though the study focuses narrowly on the pre-World War I period. You might also highlight courses taken, presentations given, or other evidence of your expertise that corresponds to the job notice.
- **Type of institution:** Often the job notice will provide a brief description of the college or university, indicating such factors as size, ownership (public, private), affiliation (religious, nonsectarian), geography (urban, suburban, rural), and so on. These factors will influence the kind of information emphasized in your letter. For example, for a job at a small liberal arts college that focuses on undergraduate teaching, you would emphasize your teaching experience and pedagogical philosophy early in the letter before mentioning your dissertation. On the other hand, for a job at a large research university you would provide at least one detailed paragraph describing your dissertation early in the letter, even

indicating your plans for future research, before mentioning your teaching and other experience.

Other Advice

If you're still working on your dissertation, you should mention somewhere in the letter when you expect to be awarded the Ph.D., even being as specific as to mention how many chapters have been completed and accepted, how many are in draft version, and what your schedule for completion is. Last-paragraph tips include the following:

- Mention your contact information, including a phone number where you can be reached if you will be away during a holiday break.
- If you will be attending an upcoming major professional conference in your field, such as the MLA convention for language and literature professionals, indicate that you will be available for an interview there. Be sure to mention that you are available for telephone or campus-visit interviews as well.
- If you have some special connection to the school, type of institution, or region, such as having attended the school as an undergraduate or having grown up in the area, you may wish to mention that information briefly at some point.
- Mention your willingness to forward upon request additional materials such as writing samples, teaching evaluations, and letters of recommendation.

For a Curriculum Vitae:

- [Writing the Curriculum Vitae](#)

Writing the Curriculum Vitae

Summary:

This handout provides an overview of strategies for writing an effective curriculum vitae. This topic is particularly important for graduate students who are entering the academic job market for the first time

Contributors:Purdue OWL

Last Edited: 2017-03-24 02:29:06

This handout provides an overview of strategies for writing an effective curriculum vitae. This topic is particularly important for graduate students who are entering the academic job market for the first time. Although there is some overlap between the two resources, this handout should serve as a supplement to the [suggestions available from Purdue's Center for Career Opportunities](#).

What is a Curriculum Vitae?

Also called a CV or vita, the curriculum vitae is, as its name suggests, an overview of your life's accomplishments, most specifically those that are relevant to the academic realm. In the United States, the curriculum vitae is used almost exclusively when one is pursuing an academic job. The curriculum vitae is a living document, which will reflect the developments in a scholar/teacher's career, and thus should be updated frequently.

How is a CV different from a resume?

The most noticeable difference between most CVs and most resumes is the length. Entry level resumes are usually limited to a page. CVs, however, often run to three or more pages. (Remember, however, that length is not the determinant of a successful CV. You should try to present all the relevant information that you possibly can, but you should also try to present it in as concise a manner as possible.) A more subtle but equally important distinction is that whereas the goal of a resume is to construct a professional identity, the goal of a CV is quite specifically to construct a scholarly identity. Thus, your CV will need to reflect very specifically your abilities as a teacher, researcher, and publishing scholar within your discipline.

What should I include?

Your CV should include your name and contact information, an overview of your education, your academic and related employment (especially teaching, editorial, or administrative experience), your research projects (including conference papers and publications), and your departmental and community service. You should also include a reference list, either as part of your CV, or on a separate page. Also, if you have a dossier containing confidential references available, you should mention that on your CV as well.

What comes first depends both on your background and on the job for which you are applying. Typically, the first item on a CV for a job candidate directly out of grad school will start with the candidate's education listed in reverse chronological order. Frequently the title and even a brief description of the dissertation will be included in this portion. After that, you will want to determine both what the jobs that you are interested in require and where your strengths lie. When determining what comes after your educational credentials, remember that the earlier in your document a particular block of information comes, the more emphasis you will be placing on that block of information. Thus, the most important information should come first.

If you are applying at a research university, research projects, conference presentations, and especially publications become very important. If you are applying to a liberal arts college or community college that strongly emphasizes teaching, then showing your teaching background is of paramount importance. In any case, you will want to be sure that the

information that will be most helpful in determining your qualifications for the job for which you are employing comes before information that will be less helpful.

Is there a standard curriculum vitae format?

One of the most important things to remember when working on your curriculum vitae is that there is not one standard format. There are different emphases in each discipline, and a good CV is one that emphasizes the points that are considered to be most important in your discipline and conforms to standard conventions within your discipline.

So how can you find out what these conventions are? A good place to start is to find as many examples as possible of CVs by people in your discipline who have recently been on the job market. You can find these by asking other grad students and junior faculty in your department if you can have a look at their CV's, and you can also make use of the Internet to find CV samples in your discipline.

Resources such as *The Curriculum Vitae Handbook* by Rebecca Anthony and Gerald Roe (Rudi Publishing: Iowa City, 1994) also include sample CVs for various disciplines. One caveat to remember regarding examples, however, is that they should never be used as models to be followed in every detail. Instead, they should be used as sources of strategies for how to present your own information most effectively. The most effective formatting for you will likely be distinguishable from the most effective formatting for someone else because your experiences and strengths will be different, and you will thus benefit from formatting adapted specifically to your situation.

How should I construct my work description entries?

Two common strategies that apply to CVs as well as resumes are **gapping** and **parallelism**. Gapping is the use of incomplete sentences in order to present your information as clearly and concisely as possible. For example, instead of writing, "I taught composition for four years, during which time I planned classes and activities, graded papers, and constructed exams. I also met with students regularly for conferences," you might write, "Composition Instructor (2000-2004). Planned course activities. Graded all assignments. Held regular conferences with students." By using incomplete sentences here, you cut out unnecessary words and allow your reader to see quickly what you have been doing.

Parallelism is also very important to a strong CV. Generally, you will want to keep the structure of your phrases and/or sentences consistent throughout your document. Thus, if you use verb phrases in one portion of your CV to describe your duties, try to use them throughout your CV. Particularly within entries, make sure that the structure of your phrases is exactly parallel so that your reader can understand what you are communicating easily.

One distinction between the work description sections of resumes and CVs is that bullets are very commonly used in resumes and tend to appear somewhat less frequently in CVs.

Whether or not you use bullets to separate lines in your CV should depend on how the bullets will affect the appearance of your CV. If you have a number of descriptive statements about your work that all run to about a line in length, bullets can be a good way of separating them. If, however, you have a lot of very short phrases, breaking them up into bulleted lists can leave a lot of white space that could be used more efficiently. Remember that the principles guiding any decision you make should be conciseness and ease of readability.

How can I improve my CV?

Purdue's Writing Lab provides the opportunity to work with one of our graduate instructors in order to get some assistance with your CV, and many other universities offer similar opportunities through their writing centers. Also, consider showing your CV to your dissertation chair in order to get some feedback from him/her. Finally, many departments have job search or job placement committees that provide you with the opportunity to meet with faculty members in your department for extensive editing. If such a resource is available for you, that may be the best source of advice of all.

What other resources are available for help with my curriculum vitae?

There are numerous useful resources, both online and in print. Here are a few.

The *Chronicle of Higher Education's* [job site](#) features a number of articles that may be helpful to first-time applicants on the job market.

The Curriculum Vitae Handbook by Rebecca Anthony and Gerald Roe (Rudi Publishing: Iowa City, 1994) includes sample CV's for various disciplines and tips for how to write CV's in various contexts.

The Academic Job Search Handbook (3rd Edition), by Mary Morris Heiberger and Julia Miller Vick (who are the authors of the *Chronicle's* "CV Doctor" column) also provides sample cover letters and CV's

For an Email:

- [Email Etiquette](#)

Email Etiquette

Summary:

Although instant and text/SMS messaging is beginning to supplant email for some groups' primary means of Internet communication, effective and appropriate email etiquette is still important. This resource will help you to become an effective writer and reader/manager of email.

Contributors:Karl Stolley, Allen Brizee

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[How do I compose an email to someone I don't know?](#)

There are a few important points to remember when composing email, particularly when the email's recipient is a superior and/or someone who does not know you.

- Be sure to include a meaningful subject line; this helps clarify what your message is about and may also help the recipient prioritize reading your email
- Just like a written letter, be sure to open your email with a greeting like Dear Dr. Jones, or Ms. Smith:
- Use standard spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN AN EMAIL SCREAMING A MESSAGE IN ALL CAPS. Do not use text abbreviations (like *u* instead of *you*, for example).
- Write clear, short paragraphs and be direct and to the point; professionals and academics alike see their email accounts as business. Don't write unnecessarily long emails or otherwise waste the recipient's time
- Be friendly and cordial, but don't try to joke around (jokes and witty remarks may be inappropriate and, more commonly, may not come off appropriately in email)

[What are some guidelines for continuing email conversations?](#)

Once you have exchanged emails with a person on a given subject, it is probably acceptable to leave greetings out of your follow-up emails. Here are some other points to consider about continuing conversations over email:

- Try to respond within a reasonable time frame, though "reasonable" will depend on the recipient's expectations and the subject being discussed
- Trim back the old messages: most email clients will keep copying older messages to the bottom of an email. Delete older messages so as to keep your message size from getting too large, and to keep your messages looking clean.
- If someone asks a lot of questions, it may be OK to embed your answers into the sender's message copied at the bottom of your email. However, if you're going to do this, be sure to say so at the top, and leave generous space, for example:

> How long are you staying?

Less than two weeks.

>Will you have time to visit with us?

I'm really hoping to, but my schedule will be pretty tight. Let me get back to you about that after the weekend.

What sorts of information shouldn't be sent via email?

Most people do not realize that email is not as private as it may seem. Without additional setup, email is not encrypted; meaning that your email is "open" and could possibly be read by an unintended person as it is transmitted to your reader. With that in mind, never send the following information over email:

- Usernames and passwords
- Credit card or other account information

Additionally, avoid sensitive or information that could be potentially damaging to someone's career and/or reputation, including your own. Beyond email's general lack of security and confidentiality, your recipient can always accidentally hit the *Forward* button, leave their email account open on a computer, or print and forget that they've printed a copy of your email.

What about sending attachments?

Here are some guidelines you should follow:

- Never send an attachment to someone you don't know the first time you contact them (unless, of course, the contact has posted a job ad requesting a resume in a Word document). They (or their computers) might think it is spam or a virus, and delete your message.
- Avoid unnecessarily large file sizes, digital photos especially. Most digital photos come off the camera much larger than can be viewed on screen. Learn how to resize your digital photo files.
- When you must send a large file or set of files, do the recipient the courtesy of sending an email telling them what you'll be sending and why.
- Be sure to have anti-virus software installed on your computer to scan all of your outgoing and incoming messages for viruses.

Is the etiquette different in email listservs and discussion groups?

Poor email behavior is always cropping up on email listservs and discussion groups. Here are some common mistakes to avoid:

- Double-check the To: area of your email when you reply. Too many people have intended to reply to the original sender alone, when in fact, their reply went to the entire list—much to their embarrassment. If you want to be extra careful, start a new email and type the single recipient's address.

- Do not air your grievances or beefs about your school, colleagues, or employer on a list. Personal attacks should also be avoided. Such postings make the organization you are associated with look bad, while also making you sound like a gossip and whiner. Particularly on large lists, you also may not know who else is on it. Be professional, and likewise avoid piling onto discussions about who's got it worst at work, school, etc.
- If you are new to a discussion list, you should "lurk" for awhile—that is, just be a reader to get the sense of what the group talks about, how it talks about it, and what types of behaviors are expected from list members. Only when you have gotten that sense should you initiate a post.

Note: this resource was posted during a day-long workshop for Norfolk State University in the development of their OWL. Purdue OWL Webmaster Karl Stolley and the Purdue OWL wish them great success.

- [Email Etiquette for Students](#)
- **Email Etiquette for Students**
- **Media File:** [Email Etiquette for Students](#)
- This resource is enhanced by a PowerPoint file. [Download the free Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer](#)
- This presentation was designed in response to the growing popularity of email and the subsequent need for information on how to craft appropriate email messages. This presentation will help you send resumes and cover letters via email, and it will help you communicate with teachers / professors.

document8

For an Exploratory Essay:

- [Essay Writing](#)

Essay Writing

Summary:

The Modes of Discourse—Exposition, Description, Narration, Argumentation (EDNA)—are common paper assignments you may encounter in your writing classes. Although these genres have been criticized by some composition scholars, the Purdue OWL recognizes the wide spread use of these approaches and students' need to understand and produce them.

Contributors: Jack Baker, Allen Brizee, Elizabeth Angeli

Last Edited: 2018-02-09 12:42:48

This resource begins with a general description of essay writing and moves to a discussion of common essay genres students may encounter across the curriculum. The four genres of essays (description, narration, exposition, and argumentation) are common paper assignments you may encounter in your writing classes. Although these genres, also known as the modes of discourse, have been criticized by some composition scholars, the Purdue OWL recognizes the wide spread use of these genres and students' need to understand and produce these types of essays. We hope these resources will help.

Overview

The essay is a commonly assigned form of writing that every student will encounter while in academia. Therefore, it is wise for the student to become capable and comfortable with this type of writing early on in her training.

Essays can be a rewarding and challenging type of writing and are often assigned either to be done in class, which requires previous planning and practice (and a bit of creativity) on the part of the student, or as homework, which likewise demands a certain amount of preparation. Many poorly crafted essays have been produced on account of a lack of preparation and confidence. However, students can avoid the discomfort often associated with essay writing by understanding some common genres.

Before delving into its various genres, let's begin with a basic definition of the essay.

What is an essay?

Though the word *essay* has come to be understood as a type of writing in Modern English, its origins provide us with some useful insights. The word comes into the English language through the French influence on Middle English; tracing it back further, we find that the French form of the word comes from the Latin verb *exigere*, which means "to examine, test, or (literally) to drive out." Through the excavation of this ancient word, we are able to unearth the essence of the academic essay: to encourage students to test or examine their ideas concerning a particular topic.

Essays are shorter pieces of writing that often require the student to hone a number of skills such as close reading, analysis, comparison and contrast, persuasion, conciseness, clarity, and exposition. As is evidenced by this list of attributes, there is much to be gained by the student who strives to succeed at essay writing.

The purpose of an essay is to encourage students to develop ideas and concepts in their writing with the direction of little more than their own thoughts (it may be helpful to view the essay as the converse of a research paper). Therefore, essays are (by nature) concise and require clarity in purpose and direction. This means that there is no room for the student's thoughts to wander or stray from his or her purpose; the writing must be deliberate and interesting.

This handout should help students become familiar and comfortable with the process of essay composition through the introduction of some common essay genres.

This handout includes a brief introduction to the following genres of essay writing:

- [Expository essays](#)

Expository Essays

Summary:

The Modes of Discourse—Exposition, Description, Narration, Argumentation (EDNA)—are common paper assignments you may encounter in your writing classes. Although these genres have been criticized by some composition scholars, the Purdue OWL recognizes the wide spread use of these approaches and students' need to understand and produce them.

Contributors: Jack Baker, Allen Brizee, Elizabeth Angeli

Last Edited: 2013-03-11 10:04:15

What is an expository essay?

The expository essay is a genre of essay that requires the student to investigate an idea, evaluate evidence, expound on the idea, and set forth an argument concerning that idea in a clear and concise manner. This can be accomplished through comparison and contrast, definition, example, the analysis of cause and effect, etc.

Please note: This genre is commonly assigned as a tool for classroom evaluation and is often found in various exam formats.

The structure of the expository essay is held together by the following.

- **A clear, concise, and defined thesis statement that occurs in the first paragraph of the essay.**

It is essential that this thesis statement be appropriately narrowed to follow the guidelines set forth in the assignment. If the student does not master this portion of the essay, it will be quite difficult to compose an effective or persuasive essay.

- **Clear and logical transitions between the introduction, body, and conclusion.**

Transitions are the mortar that holds the foundation of the essay together. Without logical progression of thought, the reader is unable to follow the essay's argument, and the structure will collapse.

- **Body paragraphs that include evidential support.**

Each paragraph should be limited to the exposition of one general idea. This will allow for clarity and direction throughout the essay. What is more, such conciseness creates an ease of readability for one's audience. It is important to note that each paragraph in the body of the essay must have some logical connection to the thesis statement in the opening paragraph.

- **Evidential support (whether factual, logical, statistical, or anecdotal).**

Often times, students are required to write expository essays with little or no preparation; therefore, such essays do not typically allow for a great deal of statistical or factual evidence.

- **A bit of creativity!**

Though creativity and artfulness are not always associated with essay writing, it is an art form nonetheless. Try not to get stuck on the formulaic nature of expository writing at the expense of writing something interesting. Remember, though you may not be crafting the next great novel, you are attempting to leave a lasting impression on the people evaluating your essay.

- **A conclusion that does not simply restate the thesis, but readdresses it in light of the evidence provided.**

It is at this point of the essay that students will inevitably begin to struggle. This is the portion of the essay that will leave the most immediate impression on the mind of the reader. Therefore, it must be effective and logical. Do not introduce any new information into the conclusion; rather, synthesize and come to a conclusion concerning the information presented in the body of the essay.

A complete argument

Perhaps it is helpful to think of an essay in terms of a conversation or debate with a classmate. If I were to discuss the cause of the Great Depression and its current effect on those who lived through the tumultuous time, there would be a beginning, middle, and end to the conversation. In fact, if I were to end the exposition in the middle of my second point, questions would arise concerning the current effects on those who lived through the Depression. Therefore, the expository essay must be complete, and logically so, leaving no doubt as to its intent or argument.

The five-paragraph Essay

A common method for writing an expository essay is the five-paragraph approach. This is, however, by no means the only formula for writing such essays. If it sounds straightforward, that is because it is; in fact, the method consists of:

1. an introductory paragraph
2. three evidentiary body paragraphs
3. a conclusion

- [Descriptive essays](#)

Descriptive Essays

Summary:

The Modes of Discourse—Exposition, Description, Narration, Argumentation (EDNA)—are common paper assignments you may encounter in your writing classes. Although these genres have been criticized by some composition scholars, the Purdue OWL recognizes the wide spread use of these approaches and students' need to understand and produce them.

Contributors: Jack Baker, Allen Brizee, Elizabeth Angeli

Last Edited: 2013-03-10 01:34:44

What is a descriptive essay?

The descriptive essay is a genre of essay that asks the student to describe something—object, person, place, experience, emotion, situation, etc. This genre encourages the student's ability to create a written account of a particular experience. What is more, this genre allows for a great deal of artistic freedom (the goal of which is to paint an image that is vivid and moving in the mind of the reader).

One might benefit from keeping in mind this simple maxim: If the reader is unable to clearly form an impression of the thing that you are describing, try, try again!

Here are some guidelines for writing a descriptive essay.

- **Take time to brainstorm**

If your instructor asks you to describe your favorite food, make sure that you jot down some ideas before you begin describing it. For instance, if you choose pizza, you might start by writing down a few words: sauce, cheese, crust, pepperoni, sausage, spices, hot,

melted, etc. Once you have written down some words, you can begin by compiling descriptive lists for each one.

- **Use clear and concise language.**

This means that words are chosen carefully, particularly for their relevancy in relation to that which you are intending to describe.

- **Choose vivid language.**

Why use *horse* when you can choose *stallion*? Why not use *tempestuous* instead of *violent*? Or why not *miserly* in place of *cheap*? Such choices form a firmer image in the mind of the reader and often times offer nuanced meanings that serve better one's purpose.

- **Use your senses!**

Remember, if you are describing something, you need to be appealing to the senses of the reader. Explain how the thing smelled, felt, sounded, tasted, or looked. Embellish the moment with senses.

- **What were you thinking?!**

If you can describe emotions or feelings related to your topic, you will connect with the reader on a deeper level. Many have felt crushing loss in their lives, or ecstatic joy, or mild complacency. Tap into this emotional reservoir in order to achieve your full descriptive potential.

- **Leave the reader with a clear impression.**

One of your goals is to evoke a strong sense of familiarity and appreciation in the reader. If your reader can walk away from the essay craving the very pizza you just described, you are on your way to writing effective descriptive essays.

- **Be organized!**

It is easy to fall into an incoherent rambling of emotions and senses when writing a descriptive essay. However, you must strive to present an organized and logical description if the reader is to come away from the essay with a cogent sense of what it is you are attempting to describe.

- [Narrative essays](#)

Narrative Essays

Summary:

The Modes of Discourse—Exposition, Description, Narration, Argumentation (EDNA)—are common paper assignments you may encounter in your writing classes. Although these genres have been criticized by some composition scholars, the Purdue OWL recognizes the wide spread use of these approaches and students' need to understand and produce them.

Contributors: Jack Baker, Allen Brizee, Elizabeth Angeli

Last Edited: 2013-07-30 01:39:00

What is a narrative essay?

When writing a narrative essay, one might think of it as telling a story. These essays are often anecdotal, experiential, and personal—allowing students to express themselves in a creative and, quite often, moving ways.

Here are some guidelines for writing a narrative essay.

- **If written as a story, the essay should include all the parts of a story.**

This means that you must include an introduction, plot, characters, setting, climax, and conclusion.

- **When would a narrative essay not be written as a story?**

A good example of this is when an instructor asks a student to write a book report. Obviously, this would not necessarily follow the pattern of a story and would focus on providing an informative narrative for the reader.

- **The essay should have a purpose.**

Make a point! Think of this as the thesis of your story. If there is no point to what you are narrating, why narrate it at all?

- **The essay should be written from a clear point of view.**

It is quite common for narrative essays to be written from the standpoint of the author; however, this is not the sole perspective to be considered. Creativity in narrative essays often times manifests itself in the form of authorial perspective.

- **Use clear and concise language throughout the essay.**

Much like the descriptive essay, narrative essays are effective when the language is carefully, particularly, and artfully chosen. Use specific language to evoke specific emotions and senses in the reader.

- **The use of the first person pronoun 'I' is welcomed.**

Do not abuse this guideline! Though it is welcomed it is not necessary—nor should it be overused for lack of clearer diction.

- **As always, be organized!**

Have a clear introduction that sets the tone for the remainder of the essay. Do not leave the reader guessing about the purpose of your narrative. Remember, you are in control of the essay, so guide it where you desire (just make sure your audience can follow your lead).

- [Argumentative \(Persuasive\) essays](#)

Argumentative Essays

Summary:

The Modes of Discourse—Exposition, Description, Narration, Argumentation (EDNA)—are common paper assignments you may encounter in your writing classes. Although these genres have been criticized by some composition scholars, the Purdue OWL recognizes the wide spread use of these approaches and students' need to understand and produce them.

Contributors: Jack Baker, Allen Brizee, Elizabeth Angeli

Last Edited: 2013-03-10 11:46:44

[What is an argumentative essay?](#)

The argumentative essay is a genre of writing that requires the student to investigate a topic; collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; and establish a position on the topic in a concise manner.

Please note: Some confusion may occur between the argumentative essay and the expository essay. These two genres are similar, but the argumentative essay differs from the expository essay in the amount of pre-writing (invention) and research involved. The argumentative essay is commonly assigned as a capstone or final project in first year writing or advanced composition courses and involves lengthy, detailed research.

Expository essays involve less research and are shorter in length. Expository essays are often used for in-class writing exercises or tests, such as the GED or GRE.

Argumentative essay assignments generally call for extensive research of literature or previously published material. Argumentative assignments may also require empirical research where the student collects data through interviews, surveys, observations, or experiments. Detailed research allows the student to learn about the topic and to understand different points of view regarding the topic so that she/he may choose a position and support it with the evidence collected during research. Regardless of the amount or type of research involved, argumentative essays must establish a clear thesis and follow sound reasoning.

The structure of the argumentative essay is held together by the following.

- **A clear, concise, and defined thesis statement that occurs in the first paragraph of the essay.**

In the first paragraph of an argument essay, students should set the context by reviewing the topic in a general way. Next the author should explain why the topic is important (**exigence**) or why readers should care about the issue. Lastly, students should present the thesis statement. It is essential that this thesis statement be appropriately narrowed to follow the guidelines set forth in the assignment. If the student does not master this portion of the essay, it will be quite difficult to compose an effective or persuasive essay.

- **Clear and logical transitions between the introduction, body, and conclusion.**

Transitions are the mortar that holds the foundation of the essay together. Without logical progression of thought, the reader is unable to follow the essay's argument, and the structure will collapse. Transitions should wrap up the idea from the previous section and introduce the idea that is to follow in the next section.

- **Body paragraphs that include evidential support.**

Each paragraph should be limited to the discussion of one general idea. This will allow for clarity and direction throughout the essay. In addition, such conciseness creates an ease of readability for one's audience. It is important to note that each paragraph in the body of the essay must have some logical connection to the thesis statement in the opening paragraph. Some paragraphs will directly support the thesis statement with evidence collected during research. It is also important to explain how and why the evidence supports the thesis (**warrant**).

However, argumentative essays should also consider and explain differing points of view regarding the topic. Depending on the length of the assignment, students should dedicate one or two paragraphs of an argumentative essay to discussing conflicting opinions on the topic. Rather than explaining how these differing opinions are wrong outright, students

should note how opinions that do not align with their thesis might not be well informed or how they might be out of date.

- **Evidential support (whether factual, logical, statistical, or anecdotal).**

The argumentative essay requires well-researched, accurate, detailed, and current information to support the thesis statement and consider other points of view. Some factual, logical, statistical, or anecdotal evidence should support the thesis. However, students must consider multiple points of view when collecting evidence. As noted in the paragraph above, a successful and well-rounded argumentative essay will also discuss opinions not aligning with the thesis. It is unethical to exclude evidence that may not support the thesis. It is not the student's job to point out how other positions are wrong outright, but rather to explain how other positions may not be well informed or up to date on the topic.

- **A conclusion that does not simply restate the thesis, but readdresses it in light of the evidence provided.**

It is at this point of the essay that students may begin to struggle. This is the portion of the essay that will leave the most immediate impression on the mind of the reader. Therefore, it must be effective and logical. Do not introduce any new information into the conclusion; rather, synthesize the information presented in the body of the essay. Restate why the topic is important, review the main points, and review your thesis. You may also want to include a short discussion of more research that should be completed in light of your work.

A complete argument

Perhaps it is helpful to think of an essay in terms of a conversation or debate with a classmate. If I were to discuss the cause of World War II and its current effect on those who lived through the tumultuous time, there would be a beginning, middle, and end to the conversation. In fact, if I were to end the argument in the middle of my second point, questions would arise concerning the current effects on those who lived through the conflict. Therefore, the argumentative essay must be complete, and logically so, leaving no doubt as to its intent or argument.

The five-paragraph essay

A common method for writing an argumentative essay is the five-paragraph approach. This is, however, by no means the only formula for writing such essays. If it sounds straightforward, that is because it is; in fact, the method consists of (a) an introductory paragraph (b) three evidentiary body paragraphs that may include discussion of opposing views and (c) a conclusion.

Longer argumentative essays

Complex issues and detailed research call for complex and detailed essays. Argumentative essays discussing a number of research sources or empirical research will most certainly be longer than five paragraphs. Authors may have to discuss the context surrounding the topic, sources of information and their credibility, as well as a number of different opinions on the issue before concluding the essay. Many of these factors will be determined by the assignment.

- [Introductions, Body Paragraphs, and Conclusions for Exploratory Essays](#)

Introductions, Body Paragraphs, and Conclusions for Exploratory Papers

Summary:

This resource will help you with exploratory/inquiry essay assignments.

Contributors: Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2018-02-09 12:59:40

Many paper assignments call for you to establish a position and defend that position with an effective argument. However, some assignments are not argumentative, but rather, they are exploratory. Exploratory essays ask questions and gather information that may answer these questions. However, the main point of the exploratory or inquiry essay is not to find definite answers. The main point is to conduct inquiry into a topic, gather information, and share that information with readers.

Introductions for Exploratory Essays

The introduction is the broad beginning of the paper that answers three important questions:

1. What is this?
2. Why am I reading it?
3. What do you want me to do?

You should answer these questions in an exploratory essay by doing the following:

1. *Set the context* – provide general information about the main idea, explaining the situation so the reader can make sense of the topic and the questions you will ask

2. *State why the main idea is important* – tell the reader why they should care and keep reading. Your goal is to create a compelling, clear, and educational essay people will want to read and act upon
3. *State your research question* – compose a question or two that clearly communicate what you want to discover and why you are interested in the topic. An overview of the types of sources you explored might follow your research question.

If your inquiry paper is long, you may want to forecast how you explored your topic by outlining the structure of your paper, the sources you considered, and the information you found in these sources. Your forecast could read something like this:

In order to explore my topic and try to answer my research question, I began with news sources. I then conducted research in scholarly sources, such as peer-reviewed journals. Lastly, I conducted an interview with a primary source. All these sources gave me a better understanding of my topic, and even though I was not able to fully answer my research questions, I learned a lot and narrowed my subject for the next paper assignment, the problem-solution report.

For this OWL resource, the example exploratory process investigates a local problem to gather more information so that eventually a solution may be suggested.

Identify a problem facing your University (institution, students, faculty, staff) or the local area and conduct exploratory research to find out as much as you can on the following:

- Causes of the problem and other contributing factors
- People/institutions involved in the situation: decision makers and stakeholders
- Possible solutions to the problem.

You do not have to argue for a solution to the problem at this point. The point of the exploratory essay is to ask an inquiry question and find out as much as you can to try to answer your question. Then write about your inquiry and findings.

For a Literary Analysis Essay:

General Advice:

- [Writing About Literature](#)

Introduction

Summary:

This handout provides examples and description about writing papers in literature. It discusses research topics, how to begin to research, how to use information, and formatting.

Contributors: Mark Dollar, Purdue OWL

Last Edited: 2011-10-19 02:27:10

What Makes a Good Literature Paper?

An argument

When you write an extended literary essay, often one requiring research, you are essentially making an argument. You are arguing that your perspective—an interpretation, an evaluative judgment, or a critical evaluation—is a valid one.

A debatable thesis statement

Like any argument paper you have ever written for a first-year composition course, you must have a specific, detailed thesis statement that reveals your perspective, and, like any good argument, your perspective must be one which is debatable.

Examples

You would *not* want to make an argument of this sort:

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a play about a young man who seeks revenge.

That doesn't *say* anything—it's basically just a summary and is hardly debatable.

A better thesis would be this:

Hamlet experiences internal conflict because he is in love with his mother.

That is debatable, controversial even. The rest of a paper with this argument as its thesis will be an attempt to show, using specific examples from the text and evidence from scholars, (1) *how* Hamlet is in love with his mother, (2) *why* he's in love with her, and (3) *what* implications there are for reading the play in this manner.

You also want to avoid a thesis statement like this:

Spirituality means different things to different people. *King Lear*, *The Book of Romans*, and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* each view the spirit differently.

Again, that says nothing that's not already self-evident. Why bother writing a paper about that? You're not writing an essay to list works that have nothing in common other than a

general topic like "spirituality." You want to find certain works or authors that, while they may have several differences, do have some specific, unifying point. That point is your thesis.

A better thesis would be this:

***Lear, Romans, and Zen* each view the soul as the center of human personality.**

Then you prove it, using examples from the texts that show that the soul is the center of personality.

- [Writing a Literary Analysis Presentation](#)
- This presentation is designed to help teachers introduce writing literary analysis to their students.

Document 9

- [Literary Theory and Schools of Criticism](#)

Literary Theory and Schools of Criticism

Summary:

This resource will help you begin the process of understanding literary theory and schools of criticism and how they are used in the academy.

Contributors: Allen Brizee, J. Case Tompkins, Libby Chernouski, Elizabeth Boyle, Sebastian Williams

Last Edited: 2018-01-24 02:47:11

Introduction

A very basic way of thinking about literary theory is that these ideas act as different lenses critics use to view and talk about art, literature, and even culture. These different lenses allow critics to consider works of art based on certain assumptions within that school of theory. The different lenses also allow critics to focus on particular aspects of a work they consider important.

For example, if a critic is working with certain Marxist theories, s/he might focus on how the characters in a story interact based on their economic situation. If a critic is working with post-colonial theories, s/he might consider the same story but look at how characters from colonial powers (Britain, France, and even America) treat characters from, say, Africa

or the Caribbean. Hopefully, after reading through and working with the resources in this area of the OWL, literary theory will become a little easier to understand and use.

Disclaimer

Please note that the schools of literary criticism and their explanations included here are by no means the only ways of distinguishing these separate areas of theory. Indeed, many critics use tools from two or more schools in their work. Some would define differently or greatly expand the (very) general statements given here. Our explanations are meant only as starting places for your own investigation into literary theory. We encourage you to use the list of scholars and works provided for each school to further your understanding of these theories.

We also recommend the following secondary sources for study of literary theory:

- *The Critical Tradition: Classical Texts and Contemporary Trends*, 1998, edited by David H. Richter
- *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 1999, by Lois Tyson
- *Beginning Theory*, 2002, by Peter Barry

Although philosophers, critics, educators and authors have been writing about writing since ancient times, contemporary schools of literary theory have cohered from these discussions and now influence how scholars look at and write about literature. The following sections overview these movements in critical theory. Though the timeline below roughly follows a chronological order, we have placed some schools closer together because they are so closely aligned.

Timeline (most of these overlap)

- Moral Criticism, Dramatic Construction (~360 BC-present)
- Formalism, New Criticism, Neo-Aristotelian Criticism (1930s-present)
- Psychoanalytic Criticism, Jungian Criticism(1930s-present)
- Marxist Criticism (1930s-present)
- Reader-Response Criticism (1960s-present)
- Structuralism/Semiotics (1920s-present)
- Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction (1966-present)
- New Historicism/Cultural Studies (1980s-present)
- Post-Colonial Criticism (1990s-present)
- Feminist Criticism (1960s-present)
- Gender/Queer Studies (1970s-present)
- Critical Race Theory (1970s-present)
- Critical Disability Studies (1990s-present)

Writing About a Novel or Story:

- [Writing About Fiction and Performing Close Reading](#)

Close Reading a Text and Avoiding Pitfalls

Summary:

This handout covers major topics relating to writing about fiction. This covers prewriting, close reading, thesis development, drafting, and common pitfalls to avoid.

Contributors: Purdue OWL Staff

Last Edited: 2014-03-31 11:22:32

Also see the OWL handout on [Writing about Literature](#) and the OWL handout on [Literary Terms](#).

Writing about a story or novel can be difficult because fiction is generally very complex and usually includes several points or themes. To discover these interwoven meanings, you must read the work closely. Below are three techniques for reading fiction actively and critically. Close reading takes more time than quick, superficial reading, but doing a close reading will save you from a lot of frustration and anxiety when you begin to develop your thesis.

Close Reading a Text

Use these "tracking" methods to yield a richer understanding of the text and lay a solid ground work for your thesis.

1. Use a highlighter, but only after you've read for comprehension. The point of highlighting at this stage is to note key passages, phrases, turning points in the story.

Pitfalls:

Highlighting too much

Highlighting without notes in the margins

2. Write marginal notes in the text.

These should be questions, comments, dialogue with the text itself.

A paragraph from Doris Lessing's short story "A Woman on a Roof" serves as an example:

The second paragraph could have a note from the reader like this:

Marginal Notes	Text
<p><i>Why is the man annoyed by the sunbather? Is Lessing commenting on sexist attitudes?</i></p>	<p>Then they saw her, between chimneys, about fifty yards away. She lay face down on a brown blanket. They could see the top part of her: black hair, aflushed solid back, arms spread out.</p> <p>"She's stark naked," said Stanley, sounding annoyed.</p>

3. Keep a notebook for freewrite summaries and response entries

3. Keep a notebook for freewrite summaries and response entries.

Write quickly after your reading: ask questions, attempt answers and make comments about whatever catches your attention. A good question to begin with when writing response entries is "What point does the author seem to be making?"

4. Step back.

After close reading and annotating, can you now make a statement about the story's meaning? Is the author commenting on a certain type of person or situation? What is that comment?

Avoiding Pitfalls

These four common assumptions about writing about fiction interfere with rather than help the writer. Learn to avoid them.

1. **Plot Summary Syndrome**

Assumes that the main task is simply recalling what happened in detail. Plot summary is just one of the requirements of writing about fiction, not the intended goal.

2. **Right Answer Roulette**

Assumes that writing about fiction is a "no win" game in which the student writer is forced to try to guess the RIGHT ANSWER that only the professor knows.

3. **The "Everything is Subjective" Shuffle**

Assumes that ANY interpretation of any literary piece is purely whimsy or personal taste. It ignores the necessity of testing each part of an interpretation against the whole text, as well as the need to validate each idea by reference to specifics from the text or quotations and discussion from the text.

4. The "How Can You Write 500 Words About One Short Story?" Blues

Assumes that writing the paper is only a way of stating the answer rather than an opportunity to explore an idea or explain what your own ideas are and why you have them. This sometimes leads to "padding," repeating the same idea in different words or worse, indiscriminate "expert" quoting: using too many quotes or quotes that are too long with little or no discussion.

- [Writing About Poetry](#)

Writing About Poetry

Summary:

This section covers the basics of how to write about poetry, including why it is done, what you should know, and what you can write about.

Contributors: Purdue OWL

Last Edited: 2018-02-21 12:51:36

Writing about poetry can be one of the most demanding tasks that many students face in a literature class. Poetry, by its very nature, makes demands on a writer who attempts to analyze it that other forms of literature do not. So how can you write a clear, confident, well-supported essay about poetry? This handout offers answers to some common questions about writing about poetry.

What's the Point?

In order to write effectively about poetry, one needs a clear idea of what the point of writing about poetry is. When you are assigned an analytical essay about a poem in an English class, the goal of the assignment is usually to argue a specific thesis about the poem, using your analysis of specific elements in the poem and how those elements relate to each other to support your thesis.

So why would your teacher give you such an assignment? What are the benefits of learning to write analytic essays about poetry? Several important reasons suggest themselves:

- To help you learn to make a text-based argument. That is, to help you to defend ideas based on a text that is available to you and other readers. This sharpens your reasoning skills by forcing you to formulate an interpretation of something someone else has written and to support that interpretation by providing logically valid reasons why someone else who has read the poem should agree with your argument. This isn't a skill that is just important in academics, by the way. Lawyers, politicians, and journalists often find that they need to make use of similar skills.
- To help you to understand what you are reading more fully. Nothing causes a person to make an extra effort to understand difficult material like the task of writing about it. Also, writing has a way of helping you to see things that you may have otherwise missed simply by causing you to think about how to frame your own analysis.
- To help you enjoy poetry more! This may sound unlikely, but one of the real pleasures of poetry is the opportunity to wrestle with the text and co-create meaning with the author. When you put together a well-constructed analysis of the poem, you are not only showing that you understand what is there, you are also contributing to an ongoing conversation about the poem. If your reading is convincing enough, everyone who has read your essay will get a little more out of the poem because of your analysis.

What Should I Know about Writing about Poetry?

Most importantly, you should realize that a paper that you write about a poem or poems is an argument. Make sure that you have something specific that you want to say about the poem that you are discussing. This specific argument that you want to make about the poem will be your thesis. You will support this thesis by drawing examples and evidence from the poem itself. In order to make a credible argument about the poem, you will want to analyze how the poem works—what genre the poem fits into, what its themes are, and what poetic techniques and figures of speech are used.

What Can I Write About?

Theme: One place to start when writing about poetry is to look at any significant themes that emerge in the poetry. Does the poetry deal with themes related to love, death, war, or peace? What other themes show up in the poem? Are there particular historical events that are mentioned in the poem? What are the most important concepts that are addressed in the poem?

Genre: What kind of poem are you looking at? Is it an epic (a long poem on a heroic subject)? Is it a sonnet (a brief poem, usually consisting of fourteen lines)? Is it an ode? A satire? An elegy? A lyric? Does it fit into a specific literary movement such as Modernism, Romanticism, Neoclassicism, or Renaissance poetry? This is another place where you may need to do some research in an introductory poetry text or encyclopedia to find out what distinguishes specific genres and movements.

Versification: Look closely at the poem's rhyme and meter. Is there an identifiable rhyme scheme? Is there a set number of syllables in each line? The most common meter for poetry

in English is iambic pentameter, which has five feet of two syllables each (thus the name "pentameter") in each of which the strongly stressed syllable follows the unstressed syllable. You can learn more about rhyme and meter by consulting our handout on [sound and meter](#) in poetry or the introduction to a standard textbook for poetry such as the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*. Also relevant to this category of concerns are techniques such as caesura (a pause in the middle of a line) and enjambment (continuing a grammatical sentence or clause from one line to the next). Is there anything that you can tell about the poem from the choices that the author has made in this area? For more information about important literary terms, see our [handout](#) on the subject.

Figures of speech: Are there literary devices being used that affect how you read the poem? Here are some examples of commonly discussed figures of speech:

- **metaphor:** comparison between two unlike things
- **simile:** comparison between two unlike things using "like" or "as"
- **metonymy:** one thing stands for something else that is closely related to it (For example, using the phrase "the crown" to refer to the king would be an example of metonymy.)
- **synecdoche:** a part stands in for a whole (For example, in the phrase "all hands on deck," "hands" stands in for the people in the ship's crew.)
- **personification:** a non-human thing is endowed with human characteristics
- **litotes:** a double negative is used for poetic effect (example: not unlike, not displeased)
- **irony:** a difference between the surface meaning of the words and the implications that may be drawn from them

Cultural Context: How does the poem you are looking at relate to the historical context in which it was written? For example, what's the cultural significance of Walt Whitman's famous elegy for Lincoln "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed" in light of post-Civil War cultural trends in the U.S.A? How does John Donne's devotional poetry relate to the contentious religious climate in seventeenth-century England? These questions may take you out of the literature section of your library altogether and involve finding out about philosophy, history, religion, economics, music, or the visual arts.

What Style Should I Use?

It is useful to follow some standard conventions when writing about poetry. First, when you analyze a poem, it is best to use present tense rather than past tense for your verbs. Second, you will want to make use of numerous quotations from the poem and explain their meaning and their significance to your argument. After all, if you do not quote the poem itself when you are making an argument about it, you damage your credibility. If your teacher asks for outside criticism of the poem as well, you should also cite points made by other critics that are relevant to your argument. A third point to remember is that there are various citation formats for citing both the material you get from the poems themselves and the information you get from other critical sources. The most common citation format for writing about poetry is the [Modern Language Association \(MLA\) format](#).

For a Literature Review:

- [Social Work Literature Review Guidelines](#)

Social Work Literature Review Guidelines

Summary:

This handout provides an overview of how to write literature reviews in the field of social work. It provides a list of suggestions and examples.

Contributors: Dana Lynn Driscoll

Last Edited: 2013-10-26 09:25:22

Literature reviews are designed to do two things: 1) give your readers an overview of sources you have explored while researching a particular topic or idea and 2) demonstrate how your research fits into the larger field of study, in this case, social work.

Unlike [annotated bibliographies](#) which are lists of references arranged alphabetically that include the bibliographic citation and a paragraph summary and critique for each source, literature reviews can be incorporated into a research paper or manuscript. You may quote or paraphrase from the sources, and all references to sources should include in-text parenthetical citations with a reference list at the end of the document. Sometimes, however, an instructor may require a separate literature review document and will have specific instructions for completing the assignment.

Below you will find general guidelines to consider when developing a literature review in the field of social work. Because social work is a social science field, you will most likely be required to use APA style. Please see our [APA materials](#) for information on creating parenthetical citations and reference lists.

1. Choose a variety of articles that relate to your subject, even if they do not directly answer your research question. You may find articles that loosely relate to the topic, rather than articles that you find using an exact keyword search. At first, you may need to cast a wide net when searching for sources.

For example: If your research question focuses on how people with chronic illnesses are treated in the workplace, you may be able to find some articles that address this specific question. You may also find literature regarding public perception of people with chronic illnesses or analyses of current laws affecting workplace discrimination.

2. Select the most relevant information from the articles as it pertains to your subject and your purpose. Remember, the purpose of the literature review is to demonstrate how your research question fits into a larger field of study.

3. Critically examine the articles. Look at methodology, statistics, results, theoretical framework, the author's purpose, etc. Include controversies when they appear in the articles.

For example: You should look for the strengths and weaknesses of how the author conducted the study. You can also decide whether or not the study is generalizable to other settings or whether the findings relate only to the specific setting of the study. Ask yourself why the author conducted the study and what he/she hoped to gain from the study. Look for inconsistencies in the results, as well.

4. Organize your information in the way that makes most sense. Some literature reviews may begin with a definition or general overview of the topic. Others may focus on another aspect of your topic. Look for themes in the literature or organize by types of study.

For example: Group case studies together, especially if all the case studies have related findings, research questions, or other similarities.

5. Make sure the information relates to your research question/thesis. You may need to explicitly show how the literature relates to the research question; don't assume that the connection is obvious.

6. Check to see that you have done more than simply summarize your sources. Your literature review should include a critical assessment of those sources. For more information, read the [Experimental Psychology - Writing a Literature Review](#) handout for questions to think about when reading sources.

7. Be sure to develop questions for further research. Again, you are not simply regurgitating information, but you are assessing and leading your reader to questions of your own, questions and ideas that haven't been explored yet or haven't been addressed in detail by the literature in the field.

- [Writing in Psychology: Experimental Report Writing](#)

Writing in Psychology Overview

Summary:

Written for undergraduate students and new graduate students in psychology (experimental), this handout provides information on writing in psychology and on experimental report and experimental article writing.

Contributors: Dana Lynn Driscoll, Aleksandra Kasztalska

Last Edited: 2013-03-12 09:53:54

Psychology is based on the study of human behaviors. As a social science, experimental psychology uses empirical inquiry to help understand human behavior. According to Thrass and Sanford (2000), psychology writing has three elements: describing, explaining, and understanding concepts from a standpoint of empirical investigation.

Discipline-specific writing, such as writing done in psychology, can be similar to other types of writing you have done in the use of the writing process, writing techniques, and in locating and integrating sources. However, the field of psychology also has its own rules and expectations for writing; not everything that you have learned in about writing in the past works for the field of psychology.

Writing in psychology includes the following principles:

- **Using plain language:** Psychology writing is formal scientific writing that is plain and straightforward. Literary devices such as metaphors, alliteration, or anecdotes are not appropriate for writing in psychology.
- **Conciseness and clarity of language:** The field of psychology stresses clear, concise prose. You should be able to make connections between empirical evidence, theories, and conclusions. See our [OWL handout](#) on conciseness for more information.
- **Evidence-based reasoning:** Psychology bases its arguments on empirical evidence. Personal examples, narratives, or opinions are not appropriate for psychology.
- **Use of APA format:** Psychologists use the American Psychological Association (APA) format for publications. While most student writing follows this format, some instructors may provide you with specific formatting requirements that differ from [APA format](#).

Types of writing

Most major writing assignments in psychology courses consists of one of the following two types.

Experimental reports: Experimental reports detail the results of experimental research projects and are most often written in experimental psychology (lab) courses. Experimental reports are write-ups of your results after you have conducted research with participants. This handout provides a description of how to write an experimental report .

Critical analyses or reviews of research: Often called "term papers," a critical analysis of research narrowly examines and draws conclusions from existing literature on a topic of

interest. These are frequently written in upper-division survey courses. Our [research paper handouts](#) provide a detailed overview of how to write these types of research papers.

For a Memo:

- [Memo Writing](#)

Audience and Purpose

Summary:

This handout will help you solve your memo-writing problems by discussing what a memo is, describing the parts of memos, and providing examples and explanations that will make your memos more effective.

Contributors: Courtnay Perkins, Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2013-03-10 11:49:14

Memos have a twofold purpose: they bring attention to problems and they solve problems. They accomplish their goals by informing the reader about new information like policy changes, price increases, or by persuading the reader to take an action, such as attend a meeting, or change a current production procedure. Regardless of the specific goal, memos are most effective when they connect the purpose of the writer with the interests and needs of the reader.

Choose the audience of the memo wisely. Ensure that all of the people that the memo is addressed to need to read the memo. If it is an issue involving only one person, do not send the memo to the entire office. Also, be certain that material is not too sensitive to put in a memo; sometimes the best forms of communication are face-to-face interaction or a phone call. Memos are most effectively used when sent to a small to moderate number of people to communicate company or job objectives.

- [Conciseness](#)

Conciseness

Summary:

This resource will help you write clearly by eliminating unnecessary words and rearranging your phrases.

Contributors: Ryan Weber, Nick Hurm

Last Edited: 2013-02-27 10:18:41

The goal of concise writing is to use the most effective words. Concise writing does not always have the fewest words, but it always uses the strongest ones. Writers often fill sentences with weak or unnecessary words that can be deleted or replaced. Words and phrases should be deliberately chosen for the work they are doing. Like bad employees, words that don't accomplish enough should be fired. When only the most effective words remain, writing will be far more concise and readable.

This resource contains general conciseness tips followed by very specific strategies for pruning sentences.

1. Replace several vague words with more powerful and specific words.

Often, writers use several small and ambiguous words to express a concept, wasting energy expressing ideas better relayed through fewer specific words. As a general rule, more specific words lead to more concise writing. Because of the variety of nouns, verbs, and adjectives, most things have a closely corresponding description. Brainstorming or searching a thesaurus can lead to the word best suited for a specific instance. Notice that the examples below actually convey more as they drop in word count.

Wordy: The politician talked about several of the merits of after-school programs in his speech

(14 words)

Concise: The politician touted after-school programs in his speech.

(8 words)

Wordy: Suzie believed but could not confirm that Billy had feelings of affection for her.

(14 words)

Concise: Suzie assumed that Billy adored her.

(6 words)

Wordy: Our Web site has made available many of the things you can use for making a decision on the best dentist.

(20 words)

Concise: Our website presents criteria for determining the best dentist.

(9 words)

Wordy: Working as a pupil under someone who develops photos was an experience that really helped me learn a lot.

(20 words)

Concise: Working as a photo technician's apprentice was an educational experience.

(10 words)

2. Interrogate every word in a sentence

Check every word to make sure that it is providing something important and unique to a sentence. If words are dead weight, they can be deleted or replaced. Other sections in this handout cover this concept more specifically, but there are some general examples below containing sentences with words that could be cut.

Wordy: The teacher demonstrated some of the various ways and methods for cutting words from my essay that I had written for class.

(22 words)

Concise: The teacher demonstrated methods for cutting words from my essay.

(10 words)

Wordy: Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band of musicians together in 1969, giving it the ironic name of Blind Faith because early speculation that was spreading everywhere about the band suggested that the new musical group would be good enough to rival the earlier bands that both men had been in, Cream and Traffic, which people had really liked and had been very popular.

(66 words)

Concise: Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band in 1969, ironically naming it Blind Faith because speculation suggested that the group would rival the musicians' previous popular bands, Cream and Traffic.

(32 words)

Wordy: Many have made the wise observation that when a stone is in motion rolling down a hill or incline that that moving stone is not as likely to be covered all over with the kind of thick green moss that grows on stationary unmoving things and becomes a nuisance and suggests that those things haven't moved in a long time and probably won't move any time soon.

(67 words)

Concise: A rolling stone gathers no moss.

(6 words)

3. Combine Sentences.

Some information does not require a full sentence, and can easily be inserted into another sentence without losing any of its value. To get more strategies for sentence combining, see the handout on [Sentence Variety](#).

Wordy: Ludwig's castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness. By his death, he had commissioned three castles.

(18 words)

Concise: Ludwig's three castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness.

(11 words)

Wordy: The supposed crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. This crash is rumored to have occurred in 1947.

(24 words)

Concise: The supposed 1947 crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life.

(16 words)

For a Narrative or Descriptive Essay:

- [Essay Writing: The Narrative Essay](#)

Narrative Essays

Summary:

The Modes of Discourse—Exposition, Description, Narration, Argumentation (EDNA)—are common paper assignments you may encounter in your writing classes. Although these genres have been criticized by some composition scholars, the Purdue OWL recognizes the wide spread use of these approaches and students' need to understand and produce them.

Contributors: Jack Baker, Allen Brizee, Elizabeth Angeli

Last Edited: 2013-07-30 01:39:00

What is a narrative essay?

When writing a narrative essay, one might think of it as telling a story. These essays are often anecdotal, experiential, and personal—allowing students to express themselves in a creative and, quite often, moving ways.

Here are some guidelines for writing a narrative essay.

- **If written as a story, the essay should include all the parts of a story.**

This means that you must include an introduction, plot, characters, setting, climax, and conclusion.

- **When would a narrative essay not be written as a story?**

A good example of this is when an instructor asks a student to write a book report. Obviously, this would not necessarily follow the pattern of a story and would focus on providing an informative narrative for the reader.

- **The essay should have a purpose.**

Make a point! Think of this as the thesis of your story. If there is no point to what you are narrating, why narrate it at all?

- **The essay should be written from a clear point of view.**

It is quite common for narrative essays to be written from the standpoint of the author; however, this is not the sole perspective to be considered. Creativity in narrative essays often times manifests itself in the form of authorial perspective.

- **Use clear and concise language throughout the essay.**

Much like the descriptive essay, narrative essays are effective when the language is carefully, particularly, and artfully chosen. Use specific language to evoke specific emotions and senses in the reader.

- **The use of the first person pronoun 'I' is welcomed.**

Do not abuse this guideline! Though it is welcomed it is not necessary—nor should it be overused for lack of clearer diction.

- **As always, be organized!**

Have a clear introduction that sets the tone for the remainder of the essay. Do not leave the reader guessing about the purpose of your narrative. Remember, you are in control of the essay, so guide it where you desire (just make sure your audience can follow your lead).

- [Essay Writing: The Descriptive Essay](#)

Descriptive Essays

Summary:

The Modes of Discourse—Exposition, Description, Narration, Argumentation (EDNA)—are common paper assignments you may encounter in your writing classes. Although these genres have been criticized by some composition scholars, the Purdue OWL recognizes the wide spread use of these approaches and students' need to understand and produce them.

Contributors: Jack Baker, Allen Brizee, Elizabeth Angeli

Last Edited: 2013-03-10 01:34:44

[What is a descriptive essay?](#)

The descriptive essay is a genre of essay that asks the student to describe something—object, person, place, experience, emotion, situation, etc. This genre encourages the student's ability to create a written account of a particular experience. What is more, this genre allows for a great deal of artistic freedom (the goal of which is to paint an image that is vivid and moving in the mind of the reader).

One might benefit from keeping in mind this simple maxim: If the reader is unable to clearly form an impression of the thing that you are describing, try, try again!

Here are some guidelines for writing a descriptive essay.

- **Take time to brainstorm**

If your instructor asks you to describe your favorite food, make sure that you jot down some ideas before you begin describing it. For instance, if you choose pizza, you might start by writing down a few words: sauce, cheese, crust, pepperoni, sausage, spices, hot, melted, etc. Once you have written down some words, you can begin by compiling descriptive lists for each one.

- **Use clear and concise language.**

This means that words are chosen carefully, particularly for their relevancy in relation to that which you are intending to describe.

- **Choose vivid language.**

Why use *horse* when you can choose *stallion*? Why not use *tempestuous* instead of *violent*? Or why not *miserly* in place of *cheap*? Such choices form a firmer image in the mind of the reader and often times offer nuanced meanings that serve better one's purpose.

- **Use your senses!**

Remember, if you are describing something, you need to be appealing to the senses of the reader. Explain how the thing smelled, felt, sounded, tasted, or looked. Embellish the moment with senses.

- **What were you thinking?!**

If you can describe emotions or feelings related to your topic, you will connect with the reader on a deeper level. Many have felt crushing loss in their lives, or ecstatic joy, or mild complacency. Tap into this emotional reservoir in order to achieve your full descriptive potential.

- **Leave the reader with a clear impression.**

One of your goals is to evoke a strong sense of familiarity and appreciation in the reader. If your reader can walk away from the essay craving the very pizza you just described, you are on your way to writing effective descriptive essays.

- **Be organized!**

It is easy to fall into an incoherent rambling of emotions and senses when writing a descriptive essay. However, you must strive to present an organized and logical description if the reader is to come away from the essay with a cogent sense of what it is you are attempting to describe.