

## Writing Styles

Whether you write essays, business materials, fiction, articles, letters, or even just notes in your journal, your writing will be at its best if you stay focused on your purpose. There are really only **four main types of writing: expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative**. Each of these four writing genres has a **distinct aim**, and they all require different **types of writing skills**. You may also have heard them referred to in an academic setting as *modes of discourse or rhetorical modes*.

### Expository Writing

The word *expository* contains the word *expose*, so the reason *expository* is an apt descriptor for this type of writing is that **it exposes**, or sets forth, **facts**. It is probably the most common writing genre you will come across throughout your day. In an expository piece, a topic will be introduced and laid out in a **logical order without reference to the author's personal opinions**. This type of writing is used to **explain a concept and share information to a broader audience**. Expository writing provides **evidence, statistics, or results** and focuses on the facts of a certain topic. This type is **not meant to express opinions**. **Expository writing** can be found in: How-to articles; **textbooks**; **news stories** (not editorials or Op-Eds); business, **technical**, or **scientific writing**, Textbooks Journalism (except for opinion and editorial articles), **Business writing**, Technical writing, Essays **Instructions**.

- The municipal government of Happyville unanimously approved the construction of sixty-two miles of bike trails in 2017. Made possible by a new tax levy, the bike trails are expected to help the city reach its sustainability and clean air goals while reducing traffic and congestion. Eighteen trailheads with restrooms and picnic areas have been planned at a variety of access points. The city expects construction to be complete in April 2021.

Because this paragraph supplies the reader with facts and figures about its topic, the new bike trails, without offering the author's opinion on it, it is expository.

#### Key Points:

- **Usually explains something in a process.**
- Is often equipped **with facts and figures**.
- Is usually in a **logical order and sequence**.

### Descriptive Writing

The aim of descriptive writing is to **help the reader visualize, in detail, a character, event, place, or all of these things at once**. The author might describe the scene in terms of all **five senses**. Descriptive writing allows the writer a great deal more **artistic freedom** than expository writing does. This type of writing is used to **depict imagery** to create a clear

picture in the mind of the reader. This method helps the readers become more connected to the writing by **appealing to their senses**. Descriptive writing employs **literary techniques** such as **similes, metaphors, allegory, etc.** to engage the audience. **Descriptive writing** can be found in: **Poetry; fictional novels or plays; memoirs or first-hand accounts of events, Advertising Journal and diary writing.**

- The children pedaled leisurely down the Happyville Bike Trail, their giggles and whoops reverberating through the warm spring air. Sweet-scented wildflowers brought an array of color to the gently undulating landscape, tempting the children to dismount now and then so they could lay down in the springy, soft grass.

Through description, this passage paints a **vivid picture of a scene** on the new bike trail.

### **Key Points:**

- It is often **poetic** in nature
- It **describes places, people, events, situations, or locations in a highly-detailed manner.**
- The author **visualizes** what he or she sees, hears, tastes, smells, and feels.

## **Persuasive Writing**

The aim of persuasive writing, or argumentation, is to **influence the reader** to assume the author's point of view. The author will **express personal opinions** in the piece and arm him- or herself with evidence so that the reader will agree with him or her. The writer is **trying to convince the reader** of the validity of a certain position or argument. It includes the writers' opinions, and provides justifications and evidence to support their claims. Persuasive writing can be found in: **Letters of recommendation; cover letters; Op-Eds** and Editorial newspaper articles; argumentative essays for academic papers, **Advertising Opinion** and editorial pieces, Reviews Job applications.

- The bike trail is the glittering gem of Happyville's new infrastructure. It winds through sixty-two miles of lush landscape, dotted by clean and convenient facilities. If you haven't experienced the Happyville Bike Trail yet, ditch your car and head outside! Could life in Happyville get any more idyllic?

A number of statements in this paragraph are **opinion rather than fact**: that the bike trail is a glittering gem, that the facilities are clean and convenient, and that life in Happyville is idyllic. Clearly, the author's aim here is to use these depictions to **persuade readers** to use the bike trail.

### **Key Points:**

- Persuasive writing is equipped with reasons, arguments, and **justifications.**
- In persuasive writing, the author takes a stand and asks you to agree with his or her point of view.

- It often asks for readers to do something about the situation (this is called a call-to-action).

## **Narrative Writing**

The purpose of narrative writing is to **tell a story**, whether that story is **real or imaginary**. Pieces in a narrative style will have characters, and through the narrative, the reader learns what happens to them. Narrative writing can also **include dialogue**. Often seen in longer writing samples, the purpose of this writing style is to **share information** in the context of a story. Narratives should **include characters, conflicts, and settings**. **Narrative writing** can be found in: All types of **fiction** (e.g., novels, short stories, novellas) Poetry, Biographies, Human interest stories, **Anecdotes**.

- As I cycled down the trail, I heard children giggling and whooping just around the bend. I crested a small hill and coasted down the curving path until I found the source of the noise. Three little girls sat in the grass by a big oak tree. They were startled to see me, and I smiled kindly to put them at ease.

“Whatcha doing?” I asked.

“Nothing,” they chirped in unison.

In this passage, the author sets the scene on the bike trail from his or her own point of view (which is referred to as **narrating in the first person**). Using both description and dialogue, the story that takes place is laid out in chronological order.

### **Key Points:**

- A person tells a **story or event**.
- Has characters and dialogue.
- Has definite and logical beginnings, intervals, and endings.
- Often has situations like actions, **motivational** events, and **disputes or conflicts** with their eventual solutions.

## **Understanding Your Purpose Empowers Your Writing**

- **Expository writing** sets forth facts. You can find it in textbooks, journalism (except opinion or editorial articles), business writing, technical writing, essays, and instructions.
- **Descriptive writing** evokes images through rich description. You can find it in fiction, poetry, journal writing, and advertising.
- **Persuasive writing** aims to sway the reader toward the author’s point of view. It is used heavily in advertising, and can also be found in opinion and editorial pieces, reviews, and job applications.
- **Narrative writing** tells a story. It can be found in fiction, poetry, biographies, human interest stories, and anecdotes.

# Argumentative vs. Persuasive Writing

## Subtle, but Significant, Differences

### Goal of ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING:

To get reader to acknowledge that **your side is valid and** deserves consideration as another point of view.

### Goal of PERSUASIVE WRITING:

To get reader to **agree with you**/your point of view on a particular topic.

### General technique of argumentative writing:

Offers the reader **relevant reasons, credible facts, and sufficient evidence** to support that the writer has a valid and worthy perspective.

### General technique of persuasive writing:

**Blends facts and emotion in attempt to convince** the reader that the writer is “right.” (Often relies heavily on opinion.)

### Starting point of argumentative writing:

**Research a topic and** then align with **one side.**

### Starting point of persuasive writing:

*Identify* a topic *and* your side.

### Viewpoint used in argumentative writing:

**Acknowledge that opposing views exist**, not only to hint at what a fair-minded person you are, but to give you the opportunity to **counter these views** tactfully in order to show why you feel that your own view is the more worthy one to hold.

### Viewpoint used in persuasive writing:

Persuasion has a **single-minded goal**. It is based on a **personal conviction** that a particular way of thinking is the only sensible way to think. Writer presents one side— his side.

Writer presents **multiple perspectives**, although is **clearly for one side.**

(Persuasive writing *may* include ONE opposing point, it is then quickly dismissed/refuted.)

### Audience of argumentative writing:

Doesn't need an audience to convince. The writer is content with simply putting it out there.

### Audience of persuasive writing:

Needs **intended audience**. Knowing what they think and believe, the writer “attacks” attempting to **persuade them to his side.**

### Attitude of argumentative writing:

Simply to get the reader to consider you have an idea worthy of listening to. The writer is sharing a conviction, whether the audience ends up agreeing or not.

### Attitude of persuasive writing:

**Persuasive writers want to gain another “vote”** so they “go after” readers more aggressively. Persuasive writing is more **personal, more passionate, more emotional.**

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