Research, Write, Present | Expository Writing

Expository Style

**Key Concept**
Have you ever explained something to someone? Maybe you explained some information you learned in school to a family member. Maybe you explained how an object or system works to a friend. Being able to explain a topic and inform an audience is an important communication skill.

Have you ever written a report? If so, you were most likely using the expository style of writing. The expository style of writing helps you to tell readers what you know about a topic or show readers how to complete an action.

An essay is a short written work that makes an important point about a topic chosen by the author. An expository essay, or exposition, is a short written work that explains a topic or informs an audience.

What can readers learn from the essay? The primary purpose of an expository essay is to communicate information to an audience. A well-written exposition presents all relevant information without favoring any particular point of view. The expository style is often the best choice for writing in both school and work.

**Look Ahead**

**Task:** Read and analyze an expository essay.

**Goal:** Show that you know what makes an effective expository essay.

You may want to review an example of an expository analysis before you begin.

**See the example:** Expository Analysis
Vocabulary

Words to Remember
This page gives basic definitions for some important terms that can help you learn about the expository style of writing. You can get a more complete definition of each term from Fact Monster*.

New Words
Audience: The people who read a publication or view a work of art, performance, or presentation.

Data: Information collected by observation or measurement.

Essay: A short written work that makes an important point about a particular topic.

Expository: A type of writing that explains a topic or informs an audience.

Fact: Information widely believed to be true and supported by objective data.

Information: Anything that can be used to create knowledge. For example, words, numbers, images, audio, and video can all contain information.

Logical: Capable of thinking in a clear and consistent way to draw correct conclusions.

Nonfiction: Any creative work that describes or comments on actual events, such as a newspaper article or biography.

Objective: Able to put aside personal feelings and opinions.

Opinion: Beliefs that may or may not be supported by facts.

Third Person: A type of writing that tells a story by using pronouns that refer to a character in the story, such as he, she, or they.
Exploration

Learning from the Web
Explore some Web sites about the expository style of writing. Learn when and how to use the expository style to write an essay.

While you explore the following Web sites, think about the guiding questions. You may want to take notes to help you answer the questions. If you think of any other questions about the expository style of writing, keep those in mind too.

Guiding Questions

- What are some good reasons to write an expository essay?
- When would the expository style not be a good choice for an essay?
- How is the expository style different from other writing you may have done?

Web Sites

- You Got Some 'Splaining to Do, Lucy: Exposition* from Fact Monster*
- Writing Workshop: Research Paper* from Scholastic*
- Expository Essays and Prompts* from The Five Paragraph Essay*
- Expository Essay* from Essay Info*
Information

What to Know
This page summarizes some of the information from the Web sites you explored. This information helps you learn what you need to know for this activity about the expository style of writing. You may want to take notes to help you remember the most important points. You can return to the Web sites for more exploration if you want to learn more.

The Expository Style of Writing
An essay is a short written work that makes an important point about a topic chosen by the author. An expository essay is a short written work that explains a topic or informs an audience. The expository style of writing is a good choice when you want to tell readers what you know about a topic or show readers how to do something.

The primary purpose of an expository essay is to communicate information to an audience. Expository writing is probably the most common type of nonfiction. Expository essays present all relevant information without favoring any particular point of view. They focus on objective information such as facts and data. Expository essays are usually written in third person, using pronouns such as he, she, or they.

The expository style of writing can be useful in a variety of contexts. Research papers are usually written in the expository style because they report facts and data about topics. You could also use the expository style in a book report, memorandum, presentation, poster, letter, or e-mail. Whenever you need to be objective, the expository style can help. The format in which you choose to write depends on your purpose and audience.

Some important points to remember about the expository style of writing:

- The topic must be specific enough to present all relevant information in the essay.
- The first paragraph should clearly state the topic and the purpose of the essay.
- Each paragraph should be organized around a main point.
- All information in a paragraph should be directly related to its main point.
- Paragraphs should be arranged in a logical order that is easy to follow and understand.
- The last paragraph should summarize the information that has been presented and explain how the purpose of the essay has been achieved.
- The last paragraph should not introduce any new information.
Task

What to Do
Complete the following task to show what you have learned about the expository style of writing. While you work through the task, think about whether you are achieving the goal. You may want to review an example of an expository analysis before you begin.

Task: Read and analyze an expository essay.

Goal: Show that you know what makes an effective expository essay.

See the example: Expository Analysis

1. Read a sample expository essay. You may choose one of the following essays, or your teacher may assign one:
   - Friendship* from The Write Source*
   - Cheating in America* from The Write Source*
   - The Many Causes of Asthma Attacks* from ThinkQuest*
   - How to Make a Simple Birthday Cake* from ThinkQuest*

2. Start a new word processing document. Always remember to type your name and the date at the top of the document.

3. Type a title for the document. You may want to include the title of the expository essay you analyze, such as Expository Analysis of ____________.

4. Write one or two paragraphs explaining why the essay you read is (or is not) an effective exposition. Give specific examples of effective (or ineffective) expository writing in the essay.

5. Check the spelling and grammar of your analysis.

6. Double-check your work by reading the document carefully one more time.

7. Review the checklist and revise your analysis to make sure it is complete.

8. Save your analysis. Ask your teacher for help if you do not know where to save the file. Your teacher may also ask you to print or e-mail your file.

9. Share your analysis.
Task Example

Student Name

Date

Expository Analysis of, “How to Make a Simple Birthday Cake”

The expository essay about making a simple birthday cake is a good example of the expository style/genre of writing. The author chose to use the process type of expository writing that explains how something is done. I feel that was the best possible choice for the subject the author chose. The first paragraph clearly states the topic of the paragraph which is how to make a birthday cake. Each of the following paragraphs logically explains the process. All the information in each paragraph is relevant and helps the reader understand the process. The last paragraph of the essay restates the topic and does not include any new information.

I feel the essay could have been improved if the author had used a wider choice of transition words. In the fourth paragraph the words then and next were used so often that it became monotonous. There are a variety of transition words that could have been used that would have moved the story along more effectively. Since the author chose the “How-to” or process style/genre of expository writing, I feel it was important for the author to not only explain how to put the icing on the cake, but how to make the icing as well. All in all I think this was a good example of a process essay.