

## Types of Expository Writing

You can use the expository style to write about almost any topic in almost any subject. Different types of expository writing are best for different purposes. Most expository types can be used in almost any subject, but some are particularly useful in certain subjects. An exposition may use only one of these types, or it may use multiple types for different purposes within the essay.

You should be able to distinguish the following five types of expository writing:

### Cause and Effect

Cause-and-effect expositions explain why an event happens. The reasons an event happens are *causes*, and the actual event is the *effect*. A simple event may have only one cause, but complex events usually have many causes. A single cause may also have many effects. Cause-and-effect relationships are particularly useful in science and social studies because they help explain natural and human events.

Cause-and-Effect Words: *because, due to, consequently, if... then, therefore, and thus.*

### Classify and Divide

Classify-and-divide expositions sort people, groups, places, events, ideas, actions, or objects into categories based on similarities and differences. The goal is usually to use as few categories as possible without overlap. For example, scientists sort living organisms into species with each organism belonging to exactly one species. An effective classify-and-divide exposition must be useful for some purpose. For example, knowing how to classify different species helps scientists understand how life evolved.

Classify-and-Divide Words: *sort, category, class, group, type, and kind.*

### Compare and Contrast

Compare-and-contrast expositions explain the similarities and differences among two (or more) people, groups, places, events, ideas, actions, or objects. The exposition may present all characteristics of one item and then another, or similarities and differences in the characteristics may be presented one at a time. Compare-and-contrast expositions are especially flexible, having effective uses in almost any subject.

Compare Words: *also, both, like, alike, likewise, comparable, similar, and related.*

Contrast Words: *however, but, not, different, distinct, contrasting, unlike, dissimilar, and unrelated.*

### Definition

Definition expositions explain the most important characteristics of a person, group, place, event, idea, action, or object. They explain what makes the item being defined what it is and not something else. The goal is to define the item in such a way that it could not be mistaken for anything else. The readers should be able to identify the item being defined even if they did not know the topic of the exposition.

Definition Words: *defined, characterized, identified, named, termed, labeled, distinguished, exemplified, and restricted.*

## **Process**

Process expositions tell an audience how to complete an action. They follow a sequence from a starting point to a successful conclusion. The goal is to explain the process in such a way that the reader can follow the sequence without any missteps or mistakes. Process expositions are particularly important in math and science. They can explain how to carry out a calculation, solve a problem, or conduct an experiment.

Process Words: *directions, instructions, procedure, step, method, formula, technique, apply, carry out, follow, conduct, and perform.*