

TYPES OF THEMES

Description, Narration, Exposition, Persuasion or Argumentation, Comparison/Contrast

I. DESCRIPTION

A. Purpose:

To give the reader a vivid image or impression of a person, object, place, or event.

B. Structure:

A person, object, place, or event can be described in a variety of ways. When writing a descriptive essay, you must focus on a specific aspect of the subject you are describing since it is impossible to describe everything about your subject!

The focus you choose for your paper will be the thesis. Choose a focus that reveals something significant about your subject and use only those details that help to establish that significance.

I. Introduction

Thesis: What aspect of your subject will you focus on?

II. Body

Each characteristic that you describe must help to reveal your subject's significance.

a. First characteristic

b. Second characteristic

c. Third characteristic

III. Conclusion

How do the characteristics you described reveal your subject's significance?

C. Details:

Since you want your reader to get a vivid impression of the subject you're describing, the details you choose are extremely important. Appeal to as many of the reader's senses as you can (smell, touch, taste, sight, sound); be careful to use concrete rather than abstract language. Avoid clichés!

II. NARRATION

A. Purpose:

To recount something that has happened or to tell a story.

B. Structure:

Establish a thesis--a focal point that your narrative is built around. Choose a thesis that reveals something significant about your narrative. In the body, emphasize those events or details that help you to demonstrate the validity of your thesis.

A narrative essay emphasizes time and sequence; it establishes when and in what order a

series of related events occurred. You may choose a variety of approaches. Here are just a few possibilities:

1. Introduce the events in chronological order.
2. Introduce the events in order of significance.
3. Introduce the most dramatic event first to get the reader's attention, then skip back in time to establish the causes of that event.

I. Introduction

Thesis: What is the focal point of your narrative?

II. Body

Choose only events that lead directly to your thesis.

A. Event #1

B. Event #2

C. Event #3

III. Conclusion

How do the events you described support your thesis?

C. Details:

Choose only the important details or the highlights that help you make your point. Avoid the "and then...and then... and then..." approach.

III. EXPOSITION

A. Purpose:

To explain or expose a thing, event, or person.

B. Structure:

Although an expository essay deals primarily with factual information, as an expository writer you must not keep your point of view hidden from your reader. In all types of writing, the writer chooses and presents information and details according to his sense of their significance and interest. Therefore, although the primary purpose of an expository essay is not to argue an issue, the writer of an expository essay will express and develop a thesis or point of view.

I. Introduction

Thesis: What is the significance of the facts you will present?

II. Body

Choose only those facts that demonstrate the correctness of your thesis.

A. Fact #1

B. Fact #2

C. Fact #3

III. Conclusion

How do the facts you present support your thesis?

C. Details:

Supply concrete evidence like statistics, quotations, or examples. Make sure that this information is logically related and organized so that the significance of the facts is clear.

IV. PERSUASION OR ARGUMENTATION

A. Purpose:

To convince the reader of your opinion by presenting a logical, believable argument supported with facts.

B. Structure: Two approaches:

Deductive Reasoning

State the thesis in the introduction and support it with examples throughout the essay.

Inductive Reasoning

Lead up to the thesis in the introduction and body, but do not actually state it until you get to the conclusion.

I. Introduction

(State the thesis if you are using the Deductive Method).

II. Body

A. “Con” Arguments:

Let the reader know that you are aware of opposing points of view, but are still convinced of your opinion. By refuting or conceding the major “con” arguments, you give the reader less opportunity to disagree with you.

B. “Pro” Arguments:

Devote one paragraph to every major “pro” argument you use; include plenty of supportive evidence for each argument.

C. Conclusion:

Highlight your arguments briefly, and remind the reader of the soundness of your stance. (Reveal the thesis if you are using the Inductive Method).

C. Evidence:

Use only valid evidence. Avoid basing your arguments on vague generalizations or on an appeal to the reader's emotions. Support each argument (pro and con) with valid evidence like statistics, relevant quotes, and examples. Leave no room for doubt. Remember, your job is to persuade.

V. COMPARISON/CONTRAST

(One method for Persuasion)

A. Purpose:

To make a point by showing the similarities and/or differences between given items. Comparing involves a discussion of differences. You may be asked to compare, to contrast, or to compare and contrast certain items, ideas, stories, characters, themes, etc.

B. Structure:

You may use either the Inductive or the Deductive Method (as explained under “Persuasion”). Regardless of your choice, the thesis must be a strong statement which points out something significant about whatever you are comparing and/or contrasting. In the body, include only those details that will help you to establish the point you make in the thesis. Here are two common approaches to writing a comparison/contrast paper:

“All A, All B” Method

State the major points about “A” in the first paragraph of the body; then in the next paragraph, state all corresponding similarities and/or differences about “B.” In the conclusion, highlight the major points of comparison and/or contrast between “A” and “B,” and clarify their relationship to your thesis.

“A,B; A,B” Method

Compare and/or contrast both “A” and “B” on one point or topic in each paragraph. Begin a new paragraph when a new topic is introduced. Most students and professors prefer this method because “A” and “B” are compared and contrasted throughout the paper.

I. Introduction

Thesis: What significant point will you reveal by showing the similarities and/or differences between certain subjects? (If you choose the Inductive Method, state your thesis in the conclusion).

II. Body: Two approaches:

A. “All A, all B” method

- 1. All characteristics of “A” (may take more than one paragraph).*
- 2. Corresponding characteristics of “B”(the number of paragraphs should correspond to the number devoted to discussing “A.”)*

B. “A,B; A,B” method

- 1. First point
Similarities and/or differences between “A” and “B.”*
- 2. Second point
Similarities and/or differences between “A” and “B.”*
- 3. Third point
Similarities and/or differences between “A” and “B.”*

III. Conclusion

Highlight the main similarities and/or differences between “A” and “B”; most important, show how the comparisons/contrasts you make establish the correctness of your thesis.

C. Evidence:

Use specific rather than vague points of comparison and contrast. Since the subjects being compared and contrasted may be quite similar, clarification is especially important. Of course, use only valid evidence as in any persuasive essay.