

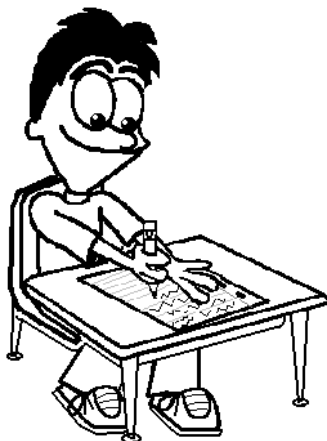
Informational / Explanatory Essays

The purpose of an informative essay, sometimes called an expository or explanatory essay, is to educate your reader on a certain topic. This essay is **not** for giving your opinion or convincing someone to do something. In addition to being informative, it needs to be interesting, or you will lose the attention of your reader.

Structure of an Informative Essay

The basic structure of an informative essay is very simple. It needs to have a beginning, middle, and an end.

- The beginning needs to present the topic and grab the attention of the audience. It needs to include a topic sentence for the entire essay, also called a **thesis sentence**.
- The middle will be the bulk of the essay and it will contain all the **evidence** that you will use to support your thesis and your **elaboration** to explain the significance of your evidence.
- The end is a **conclusion** where you will summarize the essay. It should encourage your reader to go out and learn more about the topic.



The Five Paragraph Essay format will help you to stay organized and on topic. Use the following five paragraph structure to assist you in writing your informational/explanatory essay.

✓ **First Paragraph: (Introductory Paragraph)**

The introductory paragraph includes the topic sentence (thesis). This is the sentence where you will tell your reader what your essay is about. You will also introduce supporting evidence here, but will not go into detail on any of it.

✓ **Second Paragraph**

You will provide your first piece of **evidence** in this paragraph and **elaborate** on how it supports your thesis.

✓ **Third Paragraph**

You will provide your second piece of **evidence** here and **elaborate** on how it supports your thesis. This evidence must come from a different source than the first piece of evidence you used in paragraph two.

✓ **Fourth Paragraph**

You will provide your third piece of **evidence** here and **elaborate** on how it supports your thesis. This evidence must come from a different source than the first two pieces of evidence you have used so far in your essay.

✓ **Fifth Paragraph (Conclusion)**

The concluding paragraph needs to restate, in different words, the most interesting information in your essay. This is where you wrap everything up and tie it all together.

Getting Ready to Write

When it is time to write your informational/explanatory essay, you will be given several sources to pull information from, and also be given a topic to write on. The source material might be provided to you in the form of essays, news articles, a graphic/chart, or even a video. You will need to read through all of the source material and come up with a clear thesis based upon the topic that you have been asked to write about.

Once you have a solid **thesis sentence**, you will need to find the three best pieces of **evidence** from the source materials provided. Be sure to use evidence from more than one of the sources provided.

Use the following graphic organizer to assist you in getting your thesis and evidence organized.

Paragraph 1:

Write a clear and coherent thesis sentence that will guide the rest of your essay. This will be the cornerstone of your first paragraph.

Paragraph 2:

Find your first piece of evidence from the source materials that will support your thesis. Be sure to use the correct citation to give credit to the author of this piece of information. This quoted evidence will be the cornerstone of your second paragraph.

Paragraph 3:

Find your second piece of evidence from the source materials that you will use to support your thesis. Be sure to use the correct citation to give credit to the author of this piece of information. This quoted evidence will be the cornerstone of your third paragraph.

Paragraph 4:

Find your third piece of evidence from the source materials that will support your thesis. Be sure to use the correct citation to give credit to the author of this piece of information. This quoted evidence will be the cornerstone of your fourth paragraph.

Paragraph 5:

This is your concluding paragraph. Tie everything together here by restating some of the most important information from your essay. You will not introduce any new information here. A well-constructed concluding paragraph will encourage your reader to want to find more information about your topic.

You now have all of the pieces that you will need to write an organized informational/explanatory essay. Use the evidence that you have written here to be the building blocks of your essay.

In-Text Citations

When you provide evidence in your body paragraphs, you need to be sure to give credit to the original author. Here is how you will give credit using in-text citations.

Rules for MLA in-text citations

Author named in the sentence:

Ordinarily, it is best to introduce the material being cited with a lead in that includes the author's name. In addition to preparing readers for the source, the lead in allows you to keep the parenthetical citation brief.

EXAMPLE

Frederick Lane reports that employers do not necessarily have to use software to monitor how their employees use the Web: employers can “use a hidden video camera pointed at an employee’s monitor and even position a camera so that a number of monitors [can] be viewed at the same time” (147).

The lead in — *Frederick Lane reports* — names the author; the parenthetical citation gives the page number of the book (or a paragraph number such as par. 4) in which the quoted words may be found.

** Notice that the period follows the parenthetical citation.

1. Author named in parentheses:

If a lead in does not name the author, put the author's last name in parentheses along with the page number. Use no punctuation between the name and the page number.

** If you are providing the author's last name and paragraph number, you must include a comma to separate the two (Fredrick, par. 4).

EXAMPLE

“Companies can monitor employees’ every keystroke without legal penalty, but they may have to combat low morale as a result” (Lane 129).