Research, Write, Present | Expository Writing
Expository Types

Key Concept

Have you ever read something that was too interesting and informative to forget? The Internet makes expositions on all kinds of topics available to everyone. It can help us understand almost any topic in almost any subject, from arts and literature to math and science.

One of the most flexible and powerful uses of the expository style is to compare and contrast two people, groups, places, events, ideas, or things. You can also write an exposition to classify and divide many different people, groups, places, events, ideas, or things. The compare-and-contrast and classify-and-divide forms of expository writing are useful in any subject area.

Some types of expository writing are particularly useful in certain subject areas. You can use the expository style to explain the causes and effects of natural events in science. You can write a process exposition to explain how to carry out a calculation or solve a problem in mathematics.

Different types of expository writing serve different purposes. You have learned how to recognize expository writing. Now, learn how to distinguish different expository types. Learning the different expository types helps you become a better writer, reader, and learner!

Look Ahead

Task: Read and interpret expository writing on a subject that interests you.

Goal: Show that you know how to recognize and read different types of expository writing.

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

See the example:
Expository Interpretation

Technology Literacy

Vocabulary

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

New Words
Cause: A person, group, event, idea, action, or object that produces a specific result or outcome.

Classify: Arrange people, groups, places, events, ideas, actions, or objects so that each one is assigned to a category.

Compare: Study two (or more) people, groups, places, events, ideas, actions, or objects to identify shared characteristics.

Contrast: Type or graphics that work together to create a desired effect; also, study two (or more) people, groups, places, events, ideas, actions, or objects to identify distinctive characteristics.

Divide: Separate people, groups, places, events, ideas, or things so that each one is placed into a category.

Effect: A specific result or outcome produced by something said or done by a person, group, event, idea, or thing.

Interpret: Understand or explain meaning.

Review 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*.

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Exploration

Learning from the Web

Explore some Web sites about different types of expository writing. Learn how to read an exposition more effectively and how to use different expository types in your writing.

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 types of expository writing, keep those in mind too.

Guiding Questions

- How can you recognize different types of expository writing?
- How can you use different expository types in your writing?
- What makes an expository essay interesting and informative?

Web Sites

- You Got Some 'Splaining to Do, Lucy: Exposition* from Fact Monster*
- The Perfect Couple: Cause and Effect*
- Neat and Tidy: Classify–Divide*
- Alike and Different: Comparison and Contrast*
- You Could Look It Up: Definition*
- ”How to” Essays: Process Analysis*
- Types of Essays and Student Samples* from Roane State Community College*
- Writing Cause and Effect Essays*
- Writing Comparison and Contrast Essays*
- Writing Definition Essays*

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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 types of expository 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.

Recognizing Different 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*.

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Task

What to Do

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

Task: Read and interpret expository writing on a subject that interests you.

Goal: Show that you know how to recognize and read different types of expository writing.

See the example: Expository Interpretation of Climate Change

Most of the reading and writing we are asked to do in school and work is in the expository style. Find an example of expository writing about a subject that interests you. You can use one of the following Web sites or other sources. You may want to check with your teacher to make sure the subject and source you choose are appropriate.

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Help Guide

Use the Intel® Education Help Guide to learn technology skills.

Web Technologies
Use Web with:
   Internet Explorer*
   Mozilla Firefox*
   Safari*

Word Processing
Type and change words

Search the Help Guide

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Arts and Literature

- The Collection* at the National Gallery of Art*
- Art Museums* from Kidspace @ the Internet Public Library*
- Reading Zone* from Kidspace @ the Internet Public Library*
- Masters List A-Z* from American Masters* at PBS*

History

- Kidipede—History for Kids* from Dr. Karen Carr, Portland State University
- America's Story* from the Library of Congress*
- History for Kids* from the BBC*
- The History Channel* from the A&E Television Networks*

Math

- Homework Center Mathematics* from Fact Monster*
- Ask Dr. Math* from Drexel University*
- Activities for Grades 6-8* from NCTM Illuminations*

Science

- Rivers 2001* from National Geographic*

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- Bagheera: Endangered Species* from Endangered Earth*
- Global Warming (What It Is)* from the Environmental Protection Agency*
- Windows to the Universe* from the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research*

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

2. Type a title for the document. You may want to include the title of the example you analyze, such as Expository Interpretation of _____.

3. Write two or three paragraphs explaining how the example uses the expository style of writing. Cite specific instances of effective (or ineffective) expository writing. Explain what you learned about your topic from the example.

4. Remember to save your document frequently while you work.

5. Check the spelling and grammar in your paragraphs.

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

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

8. Share your interpretation.

Task Example

Student Name

Date

Expository Interpretation of Climate Change

From

United States Environmental Protection Agency

http://epa.gov/climatechange/kids/gw.html

Climate Change uses the cause and effect style/genre of expository writing very effectively. For every cause an effect is clearly explained. In my opinion this was the best choice for global warming. When dealing with climate change, each cause has an effect. The author could have chosen to discuss global warming in a definition type format, but I don't think that it would have been as effective or engaging. I think that seeing the causes and effects discussed together strengthened the author's position that global warming can be very dangerous for the world community.

This essay has a lot of information that is clearly and logically explained. Each paragraph clearly states the topic and purpose. It explains that global warning is an average increase in the Earth's temperature. As the Earth's temperature rises it causes some of the glaciers to melt and this causes the seas to rise. Over the last 100 years the seas have risen 6-8 inches worldwide and this has caused the erosion of shorelines. The erosion causes the destruction of homes and some crops that can be affected by salt that is present in ocean waters. The Greenhouse effect makes the Earth warmer by trapping energy in the atmosphere. When the gasses can't escape the Earth's atmosphere, global warming occurs. This warming can cause problems for plants, animals and humans that can be devastating. The cause and effect style/genre of expository writing made it very easy to understand the dangers of global warning.

In conclusion, global warming affects climate change and it is because of what humans are doing to the Earth that is causing the warming of the Earth to occur at a much faster rate. If humans do not change how they treat the Earth, the affects can be very harmful.