

A large red square with a white border, centered on a white background. Inside the square, the text "Modes of Discourse" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# Modes of Discourse

There are four widely accepted modes of discourse. These are

1. The expository essay
2. The descriptive essay
3. The persuasive essay
4. The narrative essay

# Expository

The expository essay is a genre of essay that requires the student to investigate an idea, evaluate evidence, expound on the idea, and set forth an argument concerning that idea in a clear and concise manner.

This can be accomplished through comparison and contrast, definition, example, the analysis of cause and effect, etc.

The structure of the expository essay is held together by the following:

- **A clear, concise, and defined thesis statement that occurs in the first paragraph of the essay.**
- **Clear and logical transitions between the introduction, body, and conclusion.**
- **Body paragraphs that include evidential support.**
- **Evidential support (whether factual, logical, statistical, or anecdotal).**
- **A bit of creativity!**
- **A conclusion that does not simply restate the thesis, but readdresses it in light of the evidence provided.**

# Descriptive

The descriptive essay is a genre of essay that asks the writer to describe something—object, person, place, experience, emotion, situation, etc. This genre encourages the student's ability to create a written account of a particular experience. What is more, this genre allows for a great deal of artistic freedom (the goal of which is to paint an image that is vivid and moving in the mind of the reader).

Here are some guidelines for writing a descriptive essay.

- **Take time to brainstorm**
- **Use clear and concise language.**
- **Choose vivid language.**
- **Use your senses!**
- **What were you thinking?!**
- **Leave the reader with a clear impression.**
- **Be organized!**

# Narrative

When writing a narrative essay, one might think of it as telling a story. These essays are often anecdotal, experiential, and personal—allowing students to express themselves in creative and, quite often, moving ways.

Here are some guidelines for writing a narrative essay.

- **If written as a story, the essay should include all the parts of a story.**
- **The essay should have a purpose.**
- **The essay should be written from a clear point of view.**
- **Use clear and concise language throughout the essay**
- **The use of the first person pronoun 'I' is welcomed.**
- **As always, be organized!**



# Argumentative

The argumentative essay is a genre of writing that requires the student to investigate a topic; collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; and establish a position on the topic in a concise manner.

## To note:

Some confusion may occur between the argumentative essay and the expository essay. These two genres are similar, but the argumentative essay differs from the expository essay in the amount of pre-writing (invention) and research involved. The argumentative essay is commonly assigned as a capstone or final project in first year writing or advanced composition courses and involves lengthy, detailed research. Expository essays involve less research and are shorter in length. Expository essays are often used for in-class writing exercises or tests, such as the GED or GRE. (Or in our case, the BC Grade 12 Provincial Exam.)

Argumentative essay assignments generally call for extensive research of literature or previously published material. Argumentative assignments may also require empirical research where the student collects data through interviews, surveys, observations, or experiments. Detailed research allows the student to learn about the topic and to understand different points of view regarding the topic so that she/he may choose a position and support it with the evidence collected during research. Regardless of the amount or type of research involved, argumentative essays must establish a clear thesis and follow sound reasoning.

The structure of the argumentative essay is held together by the following.

- **A clear, concise, and defined thesis statement that occurs in the first paragraph of the essay.**
- **Clear and logical transitions between the introduction, body, and conclusion.**
- **Body paragraphs that include evidential support.**
- **Evidential support (whether factual, logical, statistical, or anecdotal).**
- **A conclusion that does not simply restate the thesis, but readdresses it in light of the evidence provided.**

# Let's talk about the five-part essay.

A common method for writing an expository and an argumentative essay is the five-paragraph approach. This is, however, by no means the only formula for writing such essays. If it sounds straightforward, that is because it is; in fact, the method consists of (a) an introductory paragraph (b) three evidentiary body paragraphs that may include discussion of opposing views and (c) a conclusion.

*The Purdue OWL.* Purdue U Writing Lab, 2016.