



~ Expository Writing ~

As reading researcher Timothy Shanahan has pointed out, there's lots of research on how students learn to decipher individual written words, and lots on how they comprehend whole texts—but comparatively little on “the seemingly unloved sentence.” And yet, difficulty understanding the sentence can be a major obstacle to comprehension.

Studies have found that when students write about what they're learning, in any subject, it boosts their understanding and retention. We need to shower more love on sentences. We need to expand their focus beyond reading instruction to embrace the crucial connections between reading and writing—and building the academic knowledge and vocabulary that enable them both.

Across the country—and especially in schools serving students from low-income families and English language learners—students at all grade levels have similar problems expressing themselves clearly and coherently in writing. On nationwide tests, only about 25 percent of students can score at a proficient level in writing.

And yet, expository writing—the kind of writing that explains and informs—is essential for success in school and the workplace. Students who can't write at a competent level struggle in college. Expository writing, as its name implies, is writing that *exposes facts*.

In other words, it's writing that explains and educates its readers, rather than entertaining or attempting to persuade them. When you read a scholarly article, a textbook page, a news report, or an instructional guide, you're reading expository writing.

With the advent of e-mail and the Internet, an increasing number of jobs require solid writing skills. That's true even of many jobs—such as being a paramedic—that people may not think of as involving writing.

The root of the problem, educators agree, is that teachers have little training in how to teach writing and are often weak or unconfident writers themselves. According to Kate Walsh, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, a scan of course syllabuses from 2,400 teacher preparation programs turned up little evidence that the teaching of writing was being covered in a widespread or systematic way.

Many journalistic pieces are pieces of expository writing, but not all are—advertorials, opinion pieces, and many pieces of political writing are **not** pieces of expository writing because their primary goal is something *other* than providing unbiased facts.

Always check the facts

Expository writing is all about the facts. When you're researching, you might come across contradictory sources. If this happens, examine the conflicting information to find the truth. You can do this by researching that specific piece of information and finding what other scholarly sources have to say about it and by examining who published the two conflicting sources. If one is a personal blog and the other is an article from a .edu or .gov website, the latter is more likely to be unbiased.

Expository writing is:

Factual

Usually presented in a linear format

Always presented in a logical format

Objective

Clear about its purpose

Expository writing is not:

The author's opinion

An attempt to change the reader's mind or shape their perspective

Subjective

Nonlinear or otherwise unconventional in how it presents content

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.**

It is essential that this thesis statement be appropriately narrowed to follow the guidelines set forth in the assignment. If the student does not master this portion of the essay, it will be quite difficult to compose an effective or persuasive essay.

- **Clear and logical transitions between the introduction, body, and conclusion.**

Transitions are the mortar that holds the foundation of the essay together. Without logical progression of thought, the reader is unable to follow the essay's argument, and the structure will collapse.

- **Body paragraphs that include evidential support.**

Each paragraph should be limited to the exposition of one general idea. This will allow for clarity and direction throughout the essay. What is more, such conciseness creates an ease of readability for one's audience. It is important to note that each paragraph in the body of the essay must have some logical connection to the thesis statement in the opening paragraph.

- **Evidential support (whether factual, logical, statistical, or anecdotal).**

Often, students are required to write expository essays with little or no preparation; therefore, such essays do not typically allow for a great deal of statistical or factual evidence.

- **A bit of creativity!**
- **A conclusion that does not simply restate the thesis but readdresses it considering the evidence provided.**

It is at this point of the essay that students will inevitably begin to struggle. This is the portion of the essay that will leave the most immediate impression on the mind of the reader. Therefore, it must be effective and logical. Do not introduce any new information into the conclusion; rather, synthesize and conclude concerning the information presented in the body of the essay.

Citation: Grammerly.com



"The most important sentence in any article is the first one. If it doesn't induce the reader to proceed to the second sentence, your article is dead. And if the second sentence doesn't induce him to continue to the third sentence, it's equally dead."

————— WILLIAM ZINSSER —————
"ON WRITING WELL"
(p54)