

Types of Essays and Their Purposes

There are three types of essays. Essays aiming to **entertain** try to get an emotional response from readers by making them laugh, cry, or remember a personal event. Essays aiming to **inform** readers about something use tightly constructed organization and can vary in organization, but they must somehow tell the reader something in depth. Essays that work to change someone's mind or **persuade** them to act employ both entertainment and information in order to get the reader to think a certain way.

The purpose of an essay determines the approach a writer chooses.

Do you want readers to feel kinship with you, so you write about your memories of your grandmother? Are you explaining the subject matter of Picasso's early period of painting? Are you writing to convince the Winter Park City Council to keep bars open until 4 a.m. on the weekends? Every essay has a specific purpose.

Essays Expressing Feelings

- Narrative
- Descriptive
- Op-Ed (opinion-editorials in newspapers)

Essays Explaining Ideas

- Example
- Process Analysis
- Classification/Division
- Compare/Contrast
- Cause/Effect
- Definition

Essays Inducing Change

- Argument/Persuasion

You will be asked to write all three types of essays—papers that express feelings, explain ideas, or attempt to change a reader's mind. Sometimes essays can use more than one pattern of organization to support a larger purpose. For example, an essay that seeks to compare the presidencies of Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy could include stories about the two men (narration), physical and personal descriptions of each person (description), results of their actions when each served as president (cause and effect), or examples of their leadership styles (example). However, the overall type of paper would be a Comparison/Contrast essay because its core purpose remains to compare and contrast the two presidents.