

RESEARCH ESSAYS

Persuasive Writing

We all have opinions, and throughout a day, we all probably have at least one disagreement because of our opinions. These can be something as simple as the best place to eat, the best route to take home, or even what celebrity wore it best. There are also those opinions we have that are more complex: our political, values, and beliefs. These ideas become a part of who we are, and those that are much more difficult to change. As we learn in our everyday life, most topics have at last two sides. No matter what you believe in terms of politics, there is someone out there who thinks quite the opposite is true. Have an opinion on health care? Someone else thinks differently. The same idea is true in writing.

Persuasive writing, or argumentative writing, is an essay centered on an opinion. In this type of essay, the author is trying to convince the audience that his/her viewpoint is correct. The hope is for the audience to agree with the author's opinion.

The Goals of Persuasive Writing

There are several different goals of persuasive writing.

Change an Opinion or Belief

This is probably the most common type of persuasive essay. In this essay, the author creates an argument centered on his/her opinion and finds facts to support that point of view.

Change a Habit

The author chooses a topic and encourages the audience to change behavior. For example, wear a seatbelt, wash your hands more often, or exercise more.

Take Action

In this essay, the author is encouraging the audience to do something. For example, take the action to vote or to recycle more.

Write a Proposal

This is more common in workplace or technical writing. In this essay, an author would present an idea and persuade the audience to allow something to take place or do further research.

Ideas for How-To:

First choose your topic. The topic must be debatable, which means there must be more than one viewpoint. While most people automatically think of the controversial or political topics, you do not always need to be shocking. Try to think of things you experience every day or something that you feel strongly about. The best arguments come from experience. It is also a good idea to avoid the tired or exhausted topics. These are topics that have been argued for quite some time, making it difficult to develop a unique, original point of view.

Next, develop your thesis. The **thesis** should be your central argument, what you hope to convince your audience to believe, change, or do. Avoid 'I believe' statements. Rather, state your topic and point of

view. For example, if you are writing an essay to say that news coverage should not be on a 24-hour cycle, then this would be the start of your thesis.

Third, think of your main reasons. Why should your audience change their opinion? Why should they agree with your position? Look at your thesis and then answer these questions. Try to develop at least three or four good reasons to support your point of view. These will become the body of your essay, your topic sentences, and the focus of your research. A topic sentence is the first sentence of a new paragraph, and it introduces what the paragraph will be about. It is a good idea to create a working outline at this point. List your thesis and the main points you have to begin brainstorming the supporting ideas.

After you have a working outline, start your research. When writing a persuasive essay, it is important to argue with facts. Find facts to support your point of view. Look for experts in the field and current statistics.

The Components of a Persuasive Essay

When you draft a persuasive essay, it is important to create a strong argument based in facts. To do this well, start immediately in the introduction. Your introduction should grab the reader's attention, introduce the topic, and focus on your point of view. Be sure that your thesis is clearly stated in the introduction.

The body of your paper will develop your argument. When writing a persuasive argument, it is important to avoid generalizations, name calling, and stereotypes. You want to show your point of view without offending your audience. To do this, be sure that you are considering the opposition. Be respectful of other beliefs, use good examples and evidence, and keep a professional tone. Above all else, be sure that you are well-researched and organized.

The conclusion of your essay should review the thesis and key points, and call your audience to action. This is the final appeal to your audience, so be direct in your point of view.

Applying the Steps: An Example

Jacob is assigned an argumentative essay and decides to write on education. From there, he narrows down the idea to the topic of year-round schools. His opinion is that schools should be open year round, especially because he lives in a year-round school district and has seen the benefits.

Jacob develops the working thesis for his paper: Schools in America should operate year round. This is just a working thesis, so it may change or be added to as he works.

Now Jacob will begin brainstorming his reasons for thinking that schools should operate all year round. He might predict that year-round schools make it easier to retain information, offer a better variety of vacation time, are a safe place for students, and have less down time in the summer, which could lead to trouble. A little suggestion: When brainstorming, write down all reasons that come to mind and then group similar ideas together and choose the strongest ones.

Now that he has a working thesis and has chosen three main points, Jacob starts his research by finding facts, experts, statistics, and examples. In the drafting stage, he organizes his body by these main points, presents the research to support his topic sentences, and avoids any fallacies.

In **persuasive writing**, the goal is to change the position and viewpoint of the audience. To do this, you should choose a debatable topic, focus on a specific point of view, develop reasons, and organize with research. In the research stage, it is important to find current facts and statistics. Finally, as you work, be sure to avoid any name calling and stereotypes by answering the opposition.

Persuasive Essay Writing with Multiple Sources

'Because I said so!' We've probably all heard that phrase at some point before. Maybe we heard it when we were kids, or perhaps we've used it on our own kids when we're tired of giving reasons for why something should be done. An exasperated mom might have some success using it on her little kids through sheer exercise of parental authority rather than actual explanations of why the kids should, for example, clean up their rooms.

But if you write a persuasive essay without using several reputable, credible sources to back up your assertions, no matter how good your ideas are, you're essentially saying 'Because I said so!' over and over to your readers.

Researching and Reviewing Sources

Once you have your persuasive essay topic, your first job is to determine what sources you'll use for your paper. This process will typically happen in one of two ways. If you've been assigned a persuasive essay for a class, then you'll need to conduct research to find suitable [academic sources](#) to support your position. Or, if you're taking a timed essay exam, you'll need to review the source excerpts that have been provided as part of the test so that you can become comfortable and familiar with what they say.

Note that **excerpt** is a fancy word for a short piece taken from a longer work. With standardized exams, you'll often be given a few short excerpts to read and use as sources for the essays you write.

If you've been assigned a persuasive essay for school for which you'll have to conduct your own research, be sure to use credible academic sources. That means that you'll need to use books and scholarly journals from the library. As you look for good sources, keep the following criteria in mind:

1. Look for current sources. Some history papers, for example, may not require the most recent sources, but a good rule of thumb is to find sources that have been written in the last few years.
2. Look for sources written by experts in their field or by reputable organizations.
3. Avoid Internet sites that are not run by legitimate, credible groups. Sites associated with universities, governments, and major, reputable organizations are typically acceptable. Crowd-sourced sites like Wikipedia usually are not.

If you're writing an essay for a timed exam and you've been presented with excerpts from sources that you must use in your essay, take a few minutes to read through those excerpts more than once. On your second pass through the excerpts, you can scribble notes to yourself about the key points in each source. These notes might be quite simple.

For example, if you're writing a timed persuasive essay on the topic of whether the government should place high taxes on unhealthy junk foods and you've been presented with a few short excerpts expressing differing opinions on the issue, you might jot down simple notes about what the author of each source is saying, such as 'PRO: Because people would be less likely to eat unhealthy foods. Better for society;' Or 'ANTI: Because government shouldn't interfere with personal choices about what people eat.'

It's okay to jot down simple ideas and [sentence fragments](#). We don't have to worry about whether our grade school English teachers would approve of these notes. We simply want to make it easier to refer quickly back to our sources and know what we're dealing with.

Outlining Your Points

As much as outlining your ideas before writing an essay might seem like too much additional work, it's well worth your time to do it for two major reasons. First, sketching out an outline will help you identify and organize your best, most convincing points in support of your argument. If your essay ends up being a tangled bunch of ideas, you won't end up persuading your reader or getting a good score even if you've put a few really good points in there. Second, outlining your points of argument ahead of time will help to ensure that your persuasive essay will be structured logically around your ideas. Your persuasive points should be the backbone of your paper and information from your sources should support your points.

In other words, you don't want to write a persuasive essay that's just a bunch of quotes and ideas from your sources that you've strung together. When you're writing a persuasive paper - or any paper, really - your good ideas should be the stars of the show. The information from your sources should play supporting roles to help build your credibility by providing data, facts, and credible opinions that bolster your ideas.

Remember, though, that while your ideas are the stars of your essay, you do need to back your essays up with good, credible research. Keep in mind that nagging mom from earlier. Without supporting your key points with information from your sources, you would just be trying to persuade your readers by telling them that your ideas are the right ones just because you said so. Just remember to strike the right balance between using your sources to support your points without depending on them too much and just pasting them all over the place instead of presenting your own ideas.

Incorporating Your Sources

So how do you accomplish that balance? How do you use your sources enough but not too much? Let's think now about how to avoid relying too much on your sources and not putting enough of yourself and your ideas in your paper.

The next time you write a first draft of a persuasive paper for class or a practice essay in preparation for a standardized essay exam, take a look at each body paragraph and do a quick estimate of how much space in that paragraph is devoted to you explaining your argumentative points and how much space is taken up by quotations, paraphrases, or summaries of your sources. If you find any paragraphs that consist entirely or almost entirely of material from your sources, consider that a red flag for revision.

The start and end of each body paragraph should always consist of your words and ideas. And your words and ideas should also run throughout each body paragraph, where you'll be making your major persuasive points, with ideas (and occasionally words) from your sources used as support. For example, if you're writing a persuasive essay arguing that the government should institute higher taxes on unhealthy junk food, you should have a few major points that make that case, and hopefully you should have those points organized in an outline.

If you're devoting two paragraphs to the point that such taxes would deter people from consuming junk food, which would in turn lead to a healthier community, you should have a clear topic sentence that introduces that subsection of your essay in your own words. Then look to your sources. Do you have sources that provide data showing that heavily taxed items are purchased less often? Do you have sources that provide data that show that communities that consume less junk food are healthier overall than communities whose residents do eat a lot of unhealthy foods? Use the credible facts that you find in your sources to support your major points. But be sure that you make your actual points yourself, in your own words, and just use your sources as back up.

Preferably, you should use a combination of sources throughout your paper rather than going one at a time, discussing one source, and then another and then another. Try to create a type of conversation among your various sources in which you pull facts from your sources as they become relevant, so that any one source may be used in a few different spots throughout your paper.

If your instructor or an exam scorer sees body paragraphs in your persuasive essay that consist just of information taken from your sources and tacked together, he or she will see that you haven't synthesized your sources to create your own points and ideas. **Synthesis**, in this context, means combining separate materials to form a single product. In other words, you should be taking the various reputable ideas that you have found in your sources and using them to generate and support your major, unifying thesis.

Here are some additional tips to ensure that you have done a good job of synthesizing the ideas from your sources into your persuasive essay:

- Compare your finished essay to your outline. Does your essay progress through specific, well-organized points? Remember, your major argumentative points should be driving your essay. The information from your sources should constitute [supporting details](#).
- Have you used a combination of methods to incorporate your source material? You should use a combination of summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting from your sources. Stringing together a bunch of quotations does not equal a strong, well-synthesized persuasive paper.
- Have you given yourself the last word? A paragraph that ends with a quotation - or even a paraphrased idea from a source - is a dead giveaway that the writer hasn't been synthesizing ideas, but rather copying and pasting materials from sources without really thinking about them.

In each paragraph of your paper, you should be presenting clear, logical points of argument, supported by relevant facts and ideas from your sources. But the unifying idea behind each paragraph or subsection of your paper should be yours, and the concluding point in each paragraph or subsection should therefore also be yours. Always provide your own summary that ties everything together and drives home the point that you're making.

Defining an Informative Essay

It's Sunday night and you're finding any way possible to procrastinate on your English homework assignment: to write an informative essay. 'It's gotta be easy enough,' you say to yourself, remembering your English teacher's simple explanation of an **informative essay** - to educate your reader on a topic. The only problem is, with a definition that broad, you're having a really hard time narrowing down what exactly you'd like to inform your audience about.

Flipping channels, you come across a music awards show. You hear the announcer say one of your favorite stars growing up, Smiley Virus, is set to perform next. As Smiley takes the stage, you're completely shocked. She comes out half-dressed in some kind of stuffed animal costume, and just keeps doing the same spastic dance moves over and over again. It just keeps getting more and more bizarre. It's obvious she's trying to be 'edgy,' but she just looks like a lunatic. As the camera pans the crowd, no one is sure how to react toward her 'cutting edge' performance.

As it all ends, you immediately start thinking of a way you can turn this into an informative essay - it's just too good not to write about. Your mind begins to fill with the different options your English teacher gave you.

'Informative essays come in many forms,' she said. 'They can define a term, compare and contrast something, analyze data, or provide a how-to.' 'No matter what form you choose, remember that an informative essay does not give the writer's opinion on the topic or attempt to persuade their reader to change their beliefs,' she said. Finally excited about writing your informative essay, you begin to brainstorm your options.

Informative Essays: Definition

The **definition** essay is the most basic form of an informative essay. Its goal is to simply provide an explanation. Informative essays that define provide their explanation using one of three methods: They can use synonyms to explain what the new term is similar to, categories to help the reader see where the term fits in compared to others, or negation to allow the reader to understand the term by seeing what it isn't.

In addition to the three methods, there are several ways you can organize an informative essay that provides a definition. The most important thing is to present them in a logical order that makes sense, and there's not one method that's best in every case. Some organization schemes you might consider include presenting examples from most important to least or presenting them chronologically.

In your case, a definition essay might simply tell about who Smiley Virus is. You begin to work on a rough draft for a definition-focused informative essay. You know the **introduction** should contain a thesis along with a compelling way to draw the reader in.

'As the lights dim, the crowd waits in anticipation. Slowly a beat emerges, then, as if rising from the ashes of her child star persona, a shadowy figure appears in a cloud of smoke on stage, ready to give an infamous performance no one will soon forget. As she makes her way across the stage, the spotlight shines down, showing off a new woman. No longer a little girl, this is the new Smiley Virus, the adult pop sensation.'

'Not bad,' you think. You begin with a compelling description of what you just saw and tell your reader what you'll be defining: the new adult pop sensation, Smiley Virus. You also note how you've already started to provide your explanation, through negation - letting your reader know that Smiley is not a little girl or child star anymore - and categorizing - classifying her as an 'adult pop sensation.'

Informative Essays: Compare and Contrast

Although you think the definition of Smiley Virus, adult pop sensation, could make for a good essay, you also start to ponder some of the ways this performance is similar to other ones you've seen on the same awards show. An informative essay using **compare and contrast** would fit the bill here. It allows the reader to understand the topic by looking at similarities or differences compared to other subjects.

Writing a compare and contrast informative essay would allow you to focus on Smiley's performance at the awards show, rather than just simply defining her as a pop star. You could compare and contrast her controversial performance with others from the past that were also seen as scandalous at the time.

You start to craft a thesis statement for an informative essay using compare and contrast. 'Although Smiley Virus's edgy performance made top headlines Monday morning, it's not the first time a pop sensation turned heads with their awards show performance. In fact, it's nothing new at all. In 1984, rising pop star Mona Lisa shocked fans with her controversial performance.'

Organizing a compare and contrast informative essay like this is fairly straightforward. You can present your information by points of comparison - maybe comparing Mona Lisa and Smiley's outfits, then dance moves, then popularity - or just look at your topics, Mona Lisa versus Smiley, one at a time.

Informative Essays: Analyzing Data

You're just not sure you know enough about the Mona Lisa performance to do a good job on the compare and contrast option, so you move on to another choice. You think about how Smiley ended up in that position in the first place. Perhaps an informative essay that analyzes data might work. You could look at whether life as a child star leads to outlandish behavior as an adult.

When using an informative essay to **analyze data**, you are simply explaining how something might have happened based on data you've gathered. It's basically like looking at cause and effect with no opinions presented. In this case, it's usually easiest to look at things in chronological order. This will help your reader best follow what you are trying to explain.

It's important to have lots of supporting data and statistics to explain the cause and effect situation in an analytical essay. Realizing you don't have much more than anecdotal evidence as to why many child stars end up the way they do, you move on to your final option, the how-to.

Informative Essays: How-To

The **how-to** informative essay does exactly what the name says. It explains to your reader how to do something. It's most often presented in the order of the steps involved. It dawns on you - you could provide a how-to for the new, spastic dance move Smiley showcased, 'The Bizzerk.' Easy enough, if you were able to even put those spastic dance moves into words, let alone do it well enough to explain the Bizzerk step-by-step.

You pass on that option and go back to your first idea: to write your informative essay as a definition of Smiley Virus, adult pop sensation. 'Now to flesh out the body and wrap it up,' you think to yourself.

Descriptive Essay

When you hear the word 'describe,' what does it mean to you? For most people, describing is a way of illustrating something with words. You can describe a feeling, a sound, or even an emotion.

Descriptive essays are just the same: they help you illustrate something in a way that your reader can see, feel, or hear whatever it is you're talking about. A **descriptive essay** allows a reader to understand the essay's subject using illustrative language.

Using the Five Senses

Descriptive essays are great because, in a sense (pun intended), they can help us see places we might not be able to go ourselves, hear new things, taste different flavors, smell foreign smells, or touch different textures. Descriptive essays do this through the use of more concrete concepts, which most often include our five senses.

Behold, the power of using the five senses in a descriptive essay:

'As the waves leisurely collided with the shore, I could hear the delicate lapping of the water as it met the sand. The smell of salt air and a warm afternoon wafted through the sky. Slowly, I awoke from my slumber, cuddled in a hammock that surrounded me like a cocoon. The warm sun brightly shone on my face and greeted me, 'Good afternoon!'

Based on this paragraph, where is the author? What is going on? Thanks to the five senses, you can gather that he or she is just waking up from what seems like a really peaceful nap in a hammock on a beach somewhere. How do we gather this?

Based on the description, we can see waves hitting the shore as the tide comes in, hear the water as it hits the sand, smell the salty air, and feel the warm sun. See how the senses use concrete things we've all probably experienced to some degree in our own lives to help you visualize a new scene? This is how a descriptive essay uses things we are familiar with - in this case, our five senses - to take us to a tropical paradise.

Showing vs. Telling

Even more, the description helps set a mood by using more vivid language to complement the sensory-based description. The author shows us, rather than tells us, what the afternoon on a beach is like.

Rather than saying, 'I heard the waves as the tide came in,' the author says, 'As the waves leisurely collided with the shore, I could hear the delicate lapping of the water as it met the sand.' The extra detail really helps us visualize the scene that the author is trying to create. He or she shows us what it's like to be out there on the beach when the tide comes in during the afternoon, rather than just giving us a play-by-play.

The same vivid language also helps the author to create a mood for this description. We can begin to experience the same peacefulness through the use of words like 'leisurely' and 'delicate.' Again, rather than just telling us it was a really relaxing and peaceful day, he or she lets the descriptive language show us.

Another useful technique for setting a mood with your descriptive writing is to use similes and metaphors. A **simile** is a phrase comparing two unlikely things using 'like' or 'as' in order to make a description more vivid. You've probably heard the phrase, 'running like the wind' before. This is an

example of a simile. Rather than saying, 'running really fast,' you replace the speed with something that might represent running quickly, like the wind.

A **metaphor** has the same function as a simile, but the comparison between objects is implicit, meaning there is no 'like' or 'as' used to signal the comparison. Here's an example of a metaphor from good old Shakespeare: 'All the world's a stage and the men and women merely players.' Rather than saying life is just like a play, he compares the world to where a play is acted out.

As you can see, similes and metaphors are another tool to help make your descriptions more vivid. They paint a more detailed picture for your reader, making it easier for them to understand what you're saying, not to mention more interesting, because you are showing them what you have in your mind's eye, rather than just telling them.

Organizing

By now, you probably get the idea that the style choice for your descriptive essay is pretty open. The subject of your essay and the mood you want to create really dictates how your essay is structured. Really, the only rule is to make sure you describe your subject as vividly as possible, using the five senses and showing versus telling.

There are, however, a few ways you can organize your descriptive essay to make it even easier for the reader to follow what you're saying and visualize your subject.

One option is to organize your essay from **general to particular**. For example, if you were describing the new Big Tex at the State Fair of Texas, you might start out by describing the setting - the smell of the corn dogs frying, the crowds of people, the happy children dodging in and out of the midway games - then get into his grandiose size - after all, everything is bigger in Texas, right? After that, you describe the details: his new crisp, white, pearl snap shirt, his blue jeans tucked into cowboy boots, adorned up top with his signature belt buckle, and so on.

By organizing your essay in this order, your reader not only understands what Big Tex looks like, but they are able to visualize the entire scene as well. As you can see, this structure works particularly well when the subject of your essay is an object.

If the subject was the entire State Fair of Texas rather than just Big Tex, you might choose to organize your essay **spatially**. Essays organized this way start at one point in a setting and work their way around, describing all of the elements. This allows you to take your reader on a tour of all of the fairgrounds, from the Ferris wheel and midway, to the food court lined with fried food inventions, to the Cotton Bowl stadium.

Rather than describing a thing or a place, your essay might focus on an event. In this case, structuring your essay **chronologically** is probably your best option. If you were writing your descriptive essay on what you did during your day at the fair, this would be the way to go. Beginning with what you did first, you walk your reader through all the events you encountered during your day.

Analytical Essays

Analytical essays provide an analysis of an issue or issues, breaking them down into their individual parts and presenting that analysis to the reader. Here's an example of the kind of assignment that would prompt you to write an analytical paper:

Analyze the relationship between the Wicked Witch of the West and her flying monkeys in the Wizard of Oz.

An [essay prompt](#) would demand a thesis that answered the question of what the relationship between the witch and her monkeys was - a breakdown of that relationship's psychological complexities, what the symbolism is as it relates to the story, whether she cuddles them at night, et cetera.

Argumentative and Expository Essays

Argumentative and expository essays are two types of essays that explain, expand upon and persuade the reader about a given topic. Prompts for expository essays follow the format you most often see in school assignments and standardized tests like the CLEP. This type of essay will ask you to explain why one thing leads to another. Alternately, it may ask you to compare and contrast two or more elements, explain how they interact with each other and have you take a position on that interaction.

Argumentative essays are similar but are more likely to be long-form, are more complex, include in-depth research and may include the writer's own thorough research and observations. Argumentative essays are more often the essay assignments you'll have several weeks or even a semester to write, while expository essays are shorter and better suited to an in-class assignment or time-limited exam. Both usually have a strong, defining thesis up front, probably in the first paragraph.

Here's an example of an expository essay prompt:

'Everything is funny as long as it is happening to somebody else,' actor Will Rogers is often quoted as having said. Do you agree or disagree? Using specific examples, write an essay explaining your position, drawing on your personal experience, observations or books you might have read for support.

A prompt like this will have a thesis that answers the main question first and foremost, agreeing or disagreeing with Rogers' quote and hinting as to the reasons why. Such a thesis might read:

Despite Rogers's claim, everything is not necessarily funny as long as it's happening to somebody else, but the spirit of his statement is true: Namely, that that which others find funny about you is rarely funny to yourself.

Narrative Essays

Narrative essays are the primary example of an essay that may not require a thesis statement. This is because in a narrative essay, the writer is using a story or stories to illustrate whatever greater point he or she wants to make. Take the example that follows, from a narrative essay by writer A.A. Milne (who you might know as the creator of Winnie the Pooh):

Sometimes when the printer is waiting for an article which really should have been sent to him the day before, I sit at my desk and wonder if there is any possible subject in the whole world upon which I can possibly find anything to say. On one such occasion I left it to Fate, which decided, by means of a [dictionary](#) opened at random, that I should deliver myself of a few thoughts about goldfish. (You will find this article later on in the book.) But to-day I do not need to bother about a subject. To-day I am without a care. Nothing less has happened than that I have a new nib in my pen.

Where is the thesis? What is this essay going to be about? You can't tell from the opening paragraph, except that we know it's not going to be about goldfish (that comes later, the writer tells us). We know he has a 'new nib' in his pen (a nib is the pointy part at the end of a fountain pen for those of you who have no idea what he's talking about).

The essay is called 'The Pleasure of Writing,' and it's a pleasant, rambling narrative full of little anecdotes and stories about what makes writing a happy experience for the writer that ends with his conclusion about what the true pleasure of writing is (the act of writing is its own pleasure, he believes). But you'll understand more about the 'thesis' of the essay from the title than by looking for a simple thesis statement. And that's okay!

Why You Need Evidence

Did you know that since 1969, NASA has been secretly staffed by aliens who hitched a ride back from the moon on Apollo 11?

Probably not - and you probably wouldn't believe it without a pretty watertight argument to back it up. In other words, you'd want some **evidence**, data, facts, and examples that support your point. Evidence is your answer to the reader who says, 'So wait...why should I just believe you?'

In your own writing, you might not be shocking the world with any grand conspiracy theories about Area 51 or the Illuminati, but even if you're just writing about character development in Hamlet, you'll need some evidence to back it up.

What Is Evidence?

The type of evidence you use will depend on what kind of writing you're doing. For example, in a scientific paper, you'd use citations to other studies as evidence. In a paper for English class, you might use quotations from the text. In a standardized test essay, you'd use examples from history or literature.

As a test case to look at in more detail, let's take our NASA-infiltrating aliens. Here are some pieces of evidence that could theoretically support this claim:

- During a BioScan, strange and unidentifiable life forms were detected somewhere aboard Apollo 11 as it was returning to Earth.
- Leaked security footage from NASA buildings shows unidentified green humanoid objects moving around.
- Independent observers have identified strange transmissions in an alien language being sent between NASA headquarters and the moon.

If a writer could persuade you that all these things were true, you'd probably be much more open to believing that little green men are at least up to something at NASA. That's the power of evidence.

Evidence and Relevance

It's not always enough to just bring up a lot of facts, though. You also have to connect them to your main argument. Don't rely on the reader to figure this out for herself - at best, it's frustrating, and at worst, she'll totally miss your point.

For example, what if you read this: 'Aliens have infiltrated NASA. We know this because chemical scans revealed dust with a high concentration of the mineral anorthite inside the building.'

You probably wouldn't be very convinced, right? What does anorthite have to do with aliens and NASA? It's not convincing evidence because you have no idea how it's relevant. This evidence isn't likely to persuade you of anything.

But what if the author went on to tell you that anorthite is rare on Earth, but rocks from the moon often have a high concentration of it? So if there's a bunch of anorthite dust in the building, it's probably a sign that something from the surface of the moon got in there. Now that's a lot more persuasive, right?

In your own papers, you need to explain how your evidence is relevant to what you're trying to argue. Don't leave your readers to work out the connection independently; remember that even if it's clear to you, it might not be clear to someone else.

You also need to present the reader with evidence that's appropriate for the field you're writing in. For example, in a scientific paper about teenage intellectual development, you wouldn't bring up a story about walking your dog as evidence, but in an argument with your parents about how responsible you are, it might be perfectly legitimate.

Why Do We Use Bibliographies?

Most often, when the word '**bibliography**' is used in an academic setting it's referring to *a list of sources used by the author to inform their work on a given topic*. This means that you're going to include all the works that were read when researching the topic - whether or not they're used directly in your own writing.

There are several reasons why we use bibliographies. The first major reason is to inform your reader on how widely you researched the topic on which you're writing. While you may cite only seven or eight sources within a paper, you may have read 25, 50, or even 100 different books, journal articles, or scholarly websites in finding those sources. Showing just how widely you researched your topic provides more credence and credibility to your work.

Another use for a bibliography is to allow your reader to know if you considered a work but chose not to include it within your piece, or if you didn't consult a particular author at all. For instance, I may be completing a research paper on the behavior of chimpanzees both in the wild and in captivity. If someone was reading through my piece and didn't see me cite Jane Goodall, one of the most famous chimpanzee experts of all time, they may be curious. A bibliography would let them know if I considered any of her famous works or if I failed to give her work any consideration at all. This would allow them to critique my own work on a much more informed basis.

One of the largest benefits for you personally in creating a bibliography is that it allows you to keep track of all the research you've consulted on a topic. When you are first writing a paper that you've researched, you may not initially utilize a source that you consulted. However, after you've done some rewriting and reworking of your paper, you may find that you really did need to include a source after all. Having a bibliography, it would be much easier for you to find the source information; you don't have to start all over again in the search process. Creating a bibliography allows you to build a small database of information on a number of given topics. While you're never going to write the same paper twice in an academic setting, you may write on a similar subject. Having a bibliography that you created as a place to start your research will put you much further ahead in the process.

Types of Bibliographies

What are the types on bibliographies?

1. **annotated bibliography**, and that's going to give the citation of each source you consulted along with a brief description and evaluation of the source.
2. **enumerative bibliography** is a list of sources that were consulted, simply citing them in a proper format.
3. **subject bibliography** is a list of sources on a particular subject, often considered a record of the most important works in any given field of study.

How Do You Create a Bibliography?

In an academic setting, you are most likely going to do an annotated or enumerative bibliography. Decide on the citation formatting you're going to be using: APA, MLA, and Chicago. ALWAYS KEEP a record of the citations that you're going to be using, as well as keeping them in your chosen format.

Introducing an Essay

When you write a paper, your introduction is like getting to know someone for the first time. It is your way of saying hello to your reader. It gives some attention-catching background for the information that's coming ahead, and it provides a **summary preview**, or **thesis statement**, which will show the organization of what you're going to write.

Story

One of the best ways to start just about any paper is to use a story. Be sure to choose a story that has something to do with the paper you're writing. When you're doing your research, keep your eyes open for interesting stories you might be able to use.

As an example, let's say you were assigned a classification paper, and you chose the subject of baseball. You've already figured out the subject is too big to write about, so you decide to limit the topic. You decide that you will explain the base positions and classify the tasks for each baseman.

What kind of story could you use to introduce this topic? You might start with a quick story about the famous Lou Gehrig. Even though he was an amazing hitter and first baseman, his career was cut short because of a serious disease, ALS. Starting your paper with a story like this will grab your readers' attention and help them stay with you.

Summary Preview

Now that you have told your story, what's next? This is a good time to write a sentence or two about the background of your topic - things that you think might be important for your reader to know. Then you will write your organizing statement about your topic, a thesis statement.