**How to Write an Expository Essay**

An expository essay is a fairly simple essay form to write and provides the writer with a means of explaining or defining a subject to the reader. Expository essays are meant to explain a topic to a reader. You will need to introduce a specific fact about a topic and elaborate on this fact using evidence.

**Part 1 of 3: Introduction Paragraph**

1. **1**

**Grab the reader's attention with a hook.** The first sentence or sentences of your introduction needs to grab the reader's attention and not let go. This is often referred to as a "hook," because it "hooks" the reader like a fisherman hooks a fish.[2]

* + There are different ways to create a hook. You can introduce a quote that relates to your topic, provide an interesting fact or statistic, offer a definition, or ask a rhetorical question. You could also give an anecdote, analogy, or general observation about your topic.

1. **2**

**Provide background information.** Another way to phrase this would be "providing context." Introduce your topic by providing background information that gives your reader an idea of what you plan to write about.

* + For instance, if you were writing about a book, you would provide the name of the work, the author, and a brief summary of the plot.
  + If you were writing about a specific day in history, you would summarize the day's events and explain how it fits into a broader historical scope.
  + If you were writing about a person, you would name the person and provide a basic biographical sketch.
  + The context should "build" toward your thesis statement. Explain everything the reader needs to know to understand what your topic is about, gradually narrowing it down until you reach the topic itself.

1. **3**

**Give your thesis statement.** Your thesis statement should be a single sentence that clearly and concisely defines the topic your paper is written about.

* + Craft a thesis statement from the conclusion you drew at the end of your research.
  + A thesis statement for an expository essay should not make any arguments or present any controversial idea.
  + For example, if you decided to write about the use of canines in World War II, a good thesis might be something like, "Dogs used by the United States Marine Corps during WWII played a significant role in the Pacific theater."
    - A bad thesis, on the other hand, would be something like, "The United States Marine Corps should have never used dogs during WWII."

1. **4**

**Briefly introduce your main ideas.** This part can be considered optional, but often helps to build a transition into your body paragraphs. Follow your thesis with a single sentence that briefly outlines the main points of your essay body.

* + The main points should directly connect to the topic sentences of each paragraph in the body of the essay.

**Part 2 of 3: Body Paragraphs**

1. **1**

**Know how many paragraphs to include.** The most common expository essay is the five-paragraph essay, but expository essays can be much longer than that.

* + In a five-paragraph essay, you should have three body paragraphs and, therefore, three pieces of supporting evidence that elaborate on your thesis.[3]
  + Even if your essay is longer than five paragraphs, the same principles still apply.

1. **2**

**Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence.** The topic sentence introduces the main idea of the paragraph.[4] It should provide one piece of supporting evidence that elaborates on the essay's thesis and, if you mentioned the main ideas in your introduction, it should directly correlate to one of those main ideas.

* + For example, if you are writing an expository essay about the use of dogs in the US Marine Corps during WWII, your main ideas and topic sentences could be something along the lines of:
    - "Dogs played an active role in Marine Corps missions in the Pacific."
    - "The Doberman Pinscher was the official dog of the US Marine Corps during WWII, but all breeds were eligible to train as war dogs."
    - "War dogs were even eligible to receive military awards for their service."

1. **3**

**Elaborate on your supporting evidence.** Provide specific evidence from your research to explain the topic sentence of each body paragraph in your essay.

* + The chain of support within an expository essay is as follows: the thesis is supported by the topic sentences of each body paragraph, and each topic sentence is supported by the evidence that follows it within each paragraph.
  + This evidence can include cited quotes, paraphrases, and summaries from your research.
  + It could also come from interviews, anecdotes, or personal experience.
  + Try to provide at least two to three pieces of evidence to support your claim.
  + For instance, for a paragraph starting with, "War dogs were even eligible to receive military awards for their service," the supporting evidence might be a list of dogs who were granted awards and the awards they were given.

1. **4**

**Analyze the significance of each point.** Offer a sentence or two within each paragraph explaining how the main idea of that paragraph supports the thesis.

* + Oftentimes, this may be explained through your supporting evidence.
  + Your analysis should not, however, analyze the facts in a subjective manner or be used to make an opinion about the topic at hand.

1. **5**

**Conclude and transition into your next paragraph.** Ideally, each paragraph should transition into the next. The conclusion of each body paragraph should sum up your main point while illustrating how it works together with your next point.

* + For example, if you were connecting a paragraph starting with "The Doberman Pinscher was the official dog of the US Marine Corps during WWII, but all breeds were eligible to train as war dogs" to a paragraph starting with "War dogs were, in fact, eligible to receive military awards for their service," your concluding sentence should blend the idea of dog breeds into the idea of dogs receiving military awards.
    - One possibility might read something along the lines of, "Even though Dobermans were the most common breed used in WWII, they certainly were not the only breed, and were certainly not the only ones to be recognized for their assistance."

**Part 3 of 3: Conclusion Paragraph**

1. **1**

**Restate and rephrase your thesis.** The first sentence of your concluding paragraph should restate your thesis in light of the evidence you supported.

* + Your thesis statement should not be repeated word-for-word. Restate it in a different ways, but make sure that it means the same thing.
  + For example, if your original thesis was, "Dogs used by the United States Marine Corps during WWII played a significant role in the Pacific theater,” then your restated thesis might be something like, “Dogs of all all breeds and sizes had an important and honored role to play in WWII, especially in the Pacific theater.”
    - Note that this repeats the information provided in your original thesis in a new way while also hinting at the information you included in the body of the essay.

1. **2**

**Summarize and review your main ideas.** Take one sentence to summarize each main piece of supporting evidence, as presented in your essay's body.

* + If the first sentence of your conclusion is a rephrased version of your thesis, you could argue that the following three sentences are rephrased versions of the main idea or first sentence of each body paragraph.

1. **3**

**Offer a final thought or call to action.** The last sentence of your concluding paragraph—and your expository essay overall—should make one final statement on the topic of your paper.[5]

* + For your final thought, consider:
    - Explaining how the topic affects the reader
    - Explaining how your narrow topic applies to a broader theme or observation
    - Calling the reader to action or further exploration on the topic
    - Presenting new questions your essay introduced