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19/SMS08/003

FORMS OF WRITING

**Four Types of Writing**

A writer’s style is a reflection of his or her personality, unique voice, and way of approaching the audience and readers.

However, every piece writers write is for a specific purpose—for example, writers may want to explain how something works or persuade people to agree with their point of view. While there are as many writer's styles as there are writers, there are only four general purposes that lead someone to write a piece, and these are known as the four styles, or types, of writing. Knowing all four different types and their usages is important for any writer.

## 1. Expository

Expository writing explains or informs. It talks about a subject without giving opinions.

Expository writing's main purpose is to explain. It is a subject-oriented writing style, in which authors focus on telling you about a given topic or subject without voicing their personal opinions. These types of essays or articles furnish you with relevant facts and figures but do not include their opinions. This is one of the most common types of writing. You always see it in textbooks and how-to articles. The author just tells you about a given subject, such as how to do something.

**Key Points:**

* Usually explains something in a process.
* Is often equipped with facts and figures.
* Is usually in a logical order and sequence.

**When You Would Use Expository Writing:**

* Textbook writing.
* How-to articles.
* Recipes.
* News stories (not including opinion or editorial pieces).
* Business, technical, or scientific writing.

**Example:**

Many people associate the taste of pumpkins with fall. In October, companies from Starbucks to McDonalds roll out their pumpkin-flavored lattes and desserts. Here is how to make an easy pumpkin pie using only five ingredients. First, make sure you have all of the ingredients.

This writing is expository because it is explaining. In this case, you can already tell that the piece will be about how to make a pumpkin pie.

**Non-example:**

Everyone knows that the best part about fall is all of the pumpkin-flavored desserts. Pumpkin pie is the best fall treat because it is not only delicious but also nutritious. Pumpkin is filled with vitamin A, which is essential for a healthy immune system and good vision.

This is not expository because several opinions are stated, such as “Pumpkin pie is the best fall treat…” Although this excerpt contains a fact about pumpkin containing vitamin A, that fact is used as evidence to support the opinion. These opinions make this an example of persuasive writing.

## 2. Descriptive

Descriptive writing focuses on communicating the details of a character, event, or place. | Source

Descriptive writing's main purpose is to describe. It is a style of writing that focuses on describing a character, an event, or a place in great detail. It can be poetic when the author takes the time to be very specific in his or her descriptions.

**Example:**

In good descriptive writing, the author will not just say: “The vampire killed his lover.”

He or she will change the sentence, focusing on more details and descriptions, like: “The bloody, red-eyed vampire, sunk his rust-colored teeth into the soft skin of his lover and ended her life."

**Key Points**:

* It is often poetic in nature
* It describes places, people, events, situations, or locations in a highly-detailed manner.
* The author visualizes what he or she sees, hears, tastes, smells, and feels.

**When You Would Use Descriptive Writing:**

* Poetry
* Journal or diary writing
* Nature writing
* Descriptive passages in fiction

**Example:**

The iPhone 6 is unexpectedly light. While size of its screen is bigger than those of the iPhones that came before, it is thinner, and its smooth, rounded body is made of aluminum, stainless steel, and glass. The casing comes in a whitish silver, gold, or a color the company calls “space gray,” the color of the lead of a pencil, with darker gray accents.

This is an example because it describes aspects of the phone. It includes details such as the size, weight, and material.

**Non-example:**

So you just brought home a shiny new smartphone with a smooth glass screen the size of your palm. The first thing you will want to do when purchasing a new cell is buy a case. Cracking your screen is an awful feeling, and protection is inexpensive when you compare it to the costs of a new phone.

Even though this example uses adjectives, you can tell that this is not an example of descriptive writing because the purpose is not to describe the phone—it’s to persuade you to buy a case.

## 3. Persuasive

Persuasive writing tries to bring other people around to your point of view. | Source

Persuasive writing's main purpose is to convince. Unlike expository writing, persuasive writing contains the opinions and biases of the author. To convince others to agree with the author's point of view, persuasive writing contains justifications and reasons. It is often used in letters of complaint, advertisements or commercials, affiliate marketing pitches, cover letters, and newspaper opinion and editorial pieces.

**Key Points:**

* Persuasive writing is equipped with reasons, arguments, and justifications.
* In persuasive writing, the author takes a stand and asks you to agree with his or her point of view.
* It often asks for readers to do something about the situation (this is called a call-to-action).

**When You Would Use Persuasive Writing:**

* Opinion and editorial newspaper pieces.
* Advertisements.
* Reviews (of books, music, movie, restaurants, etc.).
* Letter of recommendation.
* Letter of complaint.
* Cover letters

**Example:**

Following the 2012 Olympic Games hosted in London, the UK Trade and Investment department reported a £9.9 billion boost to the economy. Although it is expensive to host the Olympics, if done right, they can provide real jobs and economic growth. This city should consider placing a bid to host the Olympics.

This is persuasive writing because the author has a belief—that “this city should consider placing a bid to host the Olympics”—and is trying to convince others to agree.

**Non-example:**

According to legend, the Olympics were founded by Hercules. Now almost 100 countries participate in the Games, with over two million people attending. So cities from Boston to Hamburg begin considering their bid to be a host city more than 10 years in advance.

All of these statements are facts. Therefore it’s expository. To be persuasive writing, you must have an opinion that you’re trying to persuade people of—then, of course, you will support that opinion with evidence.

## 4. Narrative

A narrative tells a story. There will usually be characters and dialogue. | Source

Narrative writing's main purpose is to tell a story. The author will create different characters and tell you what happens to them (sometimes the author writes from the point of view of one of the characters—this is known as first person narration). Novels, short stories, novellas, poetry, and biographies can all fall in the narrative writing style. Simply, narrative writing answers the question: “What happened then?”

**Key Points:**

* A person tells a story or event.
* Has characters and dialogue.
* Has definite and logical beginnings, intervals, and endings.
* Often has situations like actions, motivational events, and disputes or conflicts with their eventual solutions.

**Examples of When You Would Use Persuasive Writing:**

* Novels
* Short stories
* Novellas
* Poetry
* Autobiographies or biographies
* Anecdotes
* Oral histories

**Example:**

“I don’t think that’s a good idea,” said Jaelyn.

“You never used to be such a girl!” retorted Orin, pushing open the door.

Reluctantly, Jaelyn followed.

This is a narrative because it’s telling a story. There are different characters conversing, and a plot is unravelling.

**Non-example:**

Cutting Edge Haunted House holds the Guinness World Record for the largest haunted house on earth. It’s located in a district in Fort Worth, Texas known as "Hell's Half Acre" in a century-old abandoned meat-packing plant. The haunted house takes an hour to complete, winding through horrific scenes incorporating the factory's original meat-packing equipment.

While this would serve as a worthy setting for a story, it would need a plot before it could be called a narrative.

## Conclusion

These are the four different types of writingthat are generally used. There are many sub-types of writing that may fall in any of those categories. A writer must know all these styles in order to identify the purpose of his or her own writing and make sure it's something the audience wants to read.