

## Writing Guidelines: The Analytic Essay

While these guidelines provide a framework for effective writing, the *best* writing does not always follow a formula. Given your evidence and thesis, explore different ways to present your ideas and experiment with your writing voice and style. An analytical essay can and should have flair.

### Prewriting:

#### 1. Consider the topic carefully

- If answering a question, have you fully considered the question being posed?
- If developing your own thesis, have you determined the scope of your topic?
- In either case, what point or points are you trying to make?

#### 2. Brainstorm and gather evidence

- What are the major ideas that need to be addressed for your topic?
- What are the facts and examples that support these major ideas?
- How will you organize the major ideas and evidence (e.g. an outline or flow chart)?

#### 3. Devise a working thesis

- Do you take a position that leads to analysis instead of summary?
- Is your thesis compelling?
- Do you clearly address the question or purpose?

### The Essay:

#### 1. The introduction

- Set up a context for your thesis.
- Position the thesis at or near the end of your introduction.

#### 2. The body

- Each paragraph should contain a topic sentence that introduces the main idea of the paragraph.
- Each topic sentence should link clearly to the thesis.
- If using quotations, make sure that they are relevant and appropriate to your arguments as well as attributed properly.
- Include proper analysis: this is where *your voice* gives meaning to the evidence and builds your position/argument.

#### 3. The conclusion

- In your own voice pull together the strands of your argument.
- Reemphasize your thesis without restating it word-for-word.

### Post-write:

- Proofread your paper for clarity, grammar, and mechanical issues.
- Adhere to the formatting guidelines established for the assignment (e.g. heading, title, page numbers).

### **Helpful Hints:**

1. Avoid using the first person in analytical essays. Do not say “I think” or “I feel.” Your audience already knows that you are the one doing the thinking or feeling.
2. Do not write the same way you speak; do not use colloquialisms, slang, or clichés.
3. Use your voice with conviction. If you are not convinced of your argument, your audience will not be convinced either.
4. Use precise language. Avoid words like “nice” or “very,” and use words that convey meaning (e.g. “charitable” instead of “kind”; “dictatorial” instead of “mean”).
5. Avoid the passive voice. In a passive voice sentence the subject is the receiver of the action rather than the doer. Write “John’s father drove him to school” instead of writing “John was driven to school by his father.” The passive voice is weaker and makes your sentence longer.
6. Use transitions to move smoothly from one paragraph to the next. When choosing a transition, consider the relationship between paragraphs.

### Grading Rubric:

#### **An “A” paper**

1. Provides a compelling thesis that takes a clear position and gives clear direction to the argument.
2. Consistently and comprehensively supports the thesis with detailed, relevant evidence, accurately documented.
3. Demonstrates excellent understanding by challenging or deepening the obvious interpretation of the topic or question through effective analysis.
4. Demonstrates outstanding writing and organization.

#### **A “B” paper**

1. Provides a thesis that takes a clear position and gives direction to the argument.
2. Consistently supports the thesis with detailed, relevant evidence, accurately documented.
3. Demonstrates strong understanding of the topic or question through effective analysis.
4. Demonstrates effective writing and organization.

**A “C” paper or below** is deficient in two or more areas.