

# TYPES OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Created by: Chris Kildegaard

There are many different types of writing assignments. Each type varies in the kinds of content, thesis statement, and organizational strategy that you will need to utilize. These guidelines are general; make sure you follow any specific instructions from your professor. Also be aware that these types of essays may overlap for some assignments. Always make sure that you understand your particular assignment before starting the writing process; this can save you time and stress later!

## Example 1: Argumentative Essay

*The Basics:* An argumentative, or position, assignment asks you to argue for a particular point of view on a controversial issue. Your job as a writer is to convince your readers of your position, or at least convince them to give your position thought and consideration.

*Sample Prompt:* Some people argue that exploring space adds jobs to the economy and gives us a greater understanding of scientific knowledge. Others, however, feel that the gains made are not worthwhile and the money could be used more wisely. Write an essay that presents your informed stance or opinion—your position—on the importance of America's space program. Should we continue to fund space exploration? Why or why not?

*What to do...and not to do*

DO...	DO NOT...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a <u>thesis statement</u> with a <u>clear, explicit position</u> on the issue at hand. The position does not have to be fully in-favor or fully against something, but <u>it should not be in the middle</u>.</li><li>• Provide <u>evidence for your claims</u>, in the form of statistics, scholarly journals or reputable websites, personal stories and anecdotes, etc.</li><li>• Provide a <u>counterargument</u> (another possible perspective on your issue) and a <u>rebuttal/refutation</u> (something that points out a flaw in the counterargument or otherwise explains why your argument is favorable).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simply say that there are pros and cons to both sides and <u>neither side is favorable</u>.</li><li>• Make <u>personal attacks</u> against people with opposing views.</li><li>• Provide a counterargument but <u>no rebuttal/refutation</u>.</li><li>• Devote half of your paper to your argument and the other half to opposing views, <u>such that your paper does not favor a side</u>.</li></ul>



# TYPES OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Created by: Chris Kildegaard

## Example 2: Compare and Contrast Essay

*The Basics:* A compare and contrast essay asks you to explain how two or more things are similar to and/or different from each other. Often, writing professors will ask you to compare and contrast two articles about the same controversial issue. It is important to remember not to take a side on the controversial issue when writing your paper.

*Sample Prompt:* Compare and contrast the articles “The Unappreciated Success of Charter Schools” by Adam Ozimek and “A Dozen Problems With Charter Schools” by Valerie Strauss. Address both *what* the authors say and *how* they say it (rhetoric). What do these two articles have in common, and how are they different?

*What to do...and not to do*

DO...	DO NOT...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a <u>thesis statement</u> that is <u>clear and explicit</u> on the similarities and differences. This can be general, but it should be present.</li><li>• Use <u>quotations</u> or <u>paraphrases</u> to provide examples of the similarities and differences.</li><li>• Remain <u>neutral</u> on the topic of the articles (e.g., the issue of charter schools); focus your paper on <u>how the articles are alike and different</u>.</li><li>• Examine both the <u>content</u> of the articles and the <u>rhetoric</u> (the strategies they use to communicate their content).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write a <u>position paper</u>. Remember that you should not take a position on the issue that the articles address.</li><li>• <u>Evaluate or criticize</u> the articles or authors (e.g., “Ozimek's article seems difficult to follow and misses many important points”).</li><li>• <u>Wait until several paragraphs into your essay</u> to introduce the articles you are comparing and contrasting.</li></ul>



# TYPES OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Created by: Chris Kildegaard

## Example 3: Rhetorical Analysis Essay

*The Basics:* A rhetorical analysis essay asks you to explain the rhetoric (strategies used by the author to communicate their ideas) of an article and argue why, in your opinion, those strategies are effective (or not) at convincing the audience of the author's perspective. Common aspects of articles discussed in this type of essay include writing style (Is it written as an academic paper? Is it more informal and conversational?); the types of evidence used by the author (statistics, personal anecdotes, etc.); and appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos (the "rhetorical triangle"). As with compare and contrast assignments, it is important to remember not to take a side on the issue addressed by the author.

*Sample Prompt:* Analyze the rhetoric of "Should Fine Arts Be Required?" by Sarah Mitty. What rhetorical strategies does Mitty use to try to convince her readers of her point of view? Is the article effective at doing so? Why or why not?

*What to do...and not to do*

DO...	DO NOT...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a <u>thesis statement</u> that <u>clearly states</u> whether the article is rhetorically effective and <u>why</u>.</li><li>• Use <u>quotations, paraphrases, or descriptions</u> of key aspects of the article to provide examples of the article's effectiveness (or lack thereof).</li><li>• Remain <u>neutral</u> on the topic of the articles (e.g., whether art classes should be required); focus your paper on the <u>rhetorical strategies</u> used by the author and <u>their effectiveness</u>.</li><li>• Examine the author's use of <u>ethos, pathos, and logos</u>, as well as various other rhetorical strategies (types of evidence used, visual aids like graphs and diagrams, using vivid examples, etc.)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write a <u>position paper</u>. Remember that you should not take a position on the issue that the article addresses.</li><li>• <u>Attack the author</u>, rather than critically examining the rhetoric.</li><li>• Spend <u>a large portion</u> of your paper on <u>summarizing</u> the content of the article rather than <u>addressing the rhetorical strategies</u>.</li></ul>

Reference: "Rhetorical Analysis" from Texas A&M University Writing Center.



STUDENT CENTER FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT