

Style



It is important to recognize that just like there are many distinct

styles of art or music, there are different styles of writing. Each style has its own unique characteristics and techniques.

Think about how distinct each of these pieces of writing is:

A newspaper article vs. a short story

A college application essay vs. a job resume

These differences may seem obvious, but there are also differences between academic writing assignments. A 40-page master's thesis will be structured very differently from a chemistry lab report, which will be structured differently from an 8-page research paper. In this class, you will learn a specific style of basic academic writing that is called a "five-paragraph essay." This is a very predictable nonfiction essay structure that is considered foundational to other, more advanced writing styles. A five-paragraph essay will be described in detail in the following sections.

There are a variety of benefits that come from learning how to write a five-paragraph essay. First, in order to write using other styles in the future, you need to know how to analyze an example text and base your writing off the structure you identified. Because five-paragraph essays are so straightforward, they make a good style of writing to learn this skill with. Similarly, it provides a simple context for mastering complicated skills that apply to a variety of writing styles like

logically connecting your ideas. Writing a five-paragraph essay is also a gateway skill to college admission for many students on timed exams like the TOEFL, GRE, LATs, etc. As such, most of your native-speaking peers have learned this structure in their high schools and you will have similar background knowledge to those peers as you enter the university.

You should be very careful to not assume that everything you write will always follow the structure of a five-paragraph essay. In fact, many college writing teachers will ask you to break the five-paragraph structure and use more complex structures. Your future writing will be better if you learn how to control this more prescriptive form of writing while applying the skills you will learn in this class (e.g., developing your ideas, using adequate support, etc.). You need to remember to be flexible in the way you approach writing assignments at the university. Always do a little background research before you begin writing something in a new style. That background research should include reading any resources your instructor gives you, especially a rubric or assignment description sheet.

As part of knowing the style you will use, you should understand that at this level, your essays should be based on your own knowledge and experiences (not facts you find from any outside sources). Using sources improperly can lead to plagiarism, which is a serious issue in the U.S.



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