

# Teaching Your Field's Forms of Writing

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## What's different across fields' forms of writing?

- Language (vocabulary and style)
- Research questions & how to examine an issue
- Ways of communicating ideas
- Ways of thinking
  - Analyzing
  - Hypothesizing
  - Interpreting
  - Collecting and organizing
  - Comparing
  - Predicting results
  - Criticizing
  - Making decisions
  - Identifying a problem
  - Evaluating options
  - Finding unspoken assumptions
  - Designing a project
  - Solving a problem
  - Summarizing
  - Observing
  - Applying a theory
  - Classifying
  - Imagining

## Activities to help students navigate

### CRITIQUING MODELS

- 1) Students outline the model.
- 2) Students create a *Function Chart* that lists the purpose, necessary information, key components, and format or organization for each section of the model.

#### Sample *Function Chart*

Section*	Purpose	Necessary information	Format or Organization
Introduction	draw in the reader; raise problems	short story; outside sources & their opinion; theories	story + quotes from other people + definitions + theory + main point
“Common ground” (p. 465)	[student completes the chart]		
“The ‘love ethic’” (p. 469)			
“The preamble” (p. 471)			
“Counterpublics” (p. 477)			

\* If a piece does not have section headings, the instructor can break the piece into sections by page or paragraph numbers

- 3) Students critically examine a model.

Questions to help students critically examine a model (choose the ones that best fit your situation; modify

the questions as needed):

- A. What's the primary purpose of the report?
- B. What are possible secondary purposes?
- C. Who is the audience? What assumptions about the audience does the author seem to have?
- D. How is the report organized? What is the logic behind the organization?
- E. What is the purpose of each section of the report?
- F. What do you notice about the language and style?
- G. What do you notice about the length of each section?
- H. How does the author refer to outside sources?
  - Does the author quote, summarize, or paraphrase?
  - Does the author explain the outside source in great detail?
  - How does the author signal that he or she is referring to an outside source? What kinds of "set-up phrases" are used?
- I. If you were writing a report like this, what information would you need to write each section? How might you get that information?
- J. What is the tone of the report? (serious, casual, formal, informal, ironic, threatening, light-hearted, flippant, angry, humorous, etc.)
- K. What do you notice about the style of writing? (Active or passive verbs? First person or third person?)
- L. What are possible characteristics of the typical reader?
- M. What is the goal of this type of writing? (convey an objective stance, give a personal view)
- N. Where is the main point located?
- O. How are the ideas organized?
- P. Are there subheadings or internal transitions or both?
- Q. Did the author use graphics, charts, tables, or maps?
  - How are they explained in the text?
  - When does the author use graphics? Why?
- R. What citation format was used? What do you notice about the format?
- S. What kinds of evidence are used?
- T. How much evidence is given to support a main point?
- U. Does the author rely on primary sources, secondary sources, or both?
- V. What kinds of data are used: quantitative, qualitative?
- W. Are any statistics used? Where are they presented in the report?
- X. What kinds of textual evidence seem valued (journal articles, books, newspaper articles, etc.)?

## CREATING FORM GUIDES AND CRITERIA GRIDS

The analysis of a model is translated into a *Form Guide* and *Criteria Grid*.

Example of a *Criteria Grid*

	Excellent	Adequate	Needs Work
Introduction defines and identifies topic			
Introduction describes trends			
Introduction identifies conflicts or gaps in the research			

## BUILDING-BLOCK APPROACH

Break the assignment into manageable chunks; students write one section at a time and receive (peer) feedback on each section.

Example: Lab Report

Organization of final report:

1. Abstract
2. Introduction & review of the literature
3. Methods (materials and procedures)
4. Results
5. Discussion

Instructor assigns sections in this order:

1. Methods
2. Results
3. Introduction
4. Discussion
5. Abstract

## WRITE-TO-LEARN APPROACH

Short, “thinking-intensive” assignments are given before students tackle writing in the formal genre.

Instructor determines the intended audience and ways of thinking or ways of arguing that are used in the genre. Designs assignments that help students understand audience expectations and help students practice appropriate thinking skills.

1) Tell students who the intended audience is. Ask them to describe the audience members:

- What content knowledge do they have?
- What tone will they respond favorably to?
- What style of writing?
- What sources of evidence do they value?
- What kinds of evidence will be persuasive?

2) Assign “thinking-intensive” activities

(Before and after the assignment, explain to students how the skills they are practicing will be the skills needed to write in the genre of the field.)

## Examples

- Matrix – analyzing; collecting and organizing
- Pro-con grid – analyzing; comparing
- Invented dialogues – comparing; applying theory
- Documented problem solutions – solving a problem; finding unspoken assumptions
- Application cards – applying theory
- Direct paraphrasing – summarizing
- Concept map – classifying; seeing relationships
- Sample data set – interpreting
- Believing & doubting game – criticizing
- Role playing – criticizing; finding unspoken assumptions
- Metaphors, Analogies – classifying; interpreting; imagining
- Performance – analyzing; interpreting; imagining
- In-class games – analyzing; interpreting; imagining
- What-if – solving a problem; applying a theory; predicting results; analyzing; interpreting
- Evidence-finding – evaluating options; interpreting; designing a project

What forms or genres do students encounter in writing-intensive classes?

***Most common, in order by frequency assigned***

Paper, essay, composition
In-class writing (e.g., freewriting, brainstorming)
Exam—in-class
Informal writing (e.g., weekly reading response, response paper)
Peer review
Journal (log)
Outline, paper proposal
Research paper—5-10 pages
Visual aids
Research paper—11+ pages
Project
Abstract, summary
Exam—take-home
Internet-post/email
Report
Teaching materials
Bibliography
Homework—written answers
Lab report
Book review
Critique, critical review
Literary analysis
Memo
Exercises/assignments
Creative writing
Case study
Self evaluation
Portfolio of written work
Resume, job application

***Less common, in alphabetical order***

- Agenda/minutes
- Anthology introduction
- Article/short article
- Artist statement
- Assessment techniques
- Author's progress report
- Autobiography
- Book
- Briefs
- Business plan
- Chapter for book
- Classroom diagram
- Clinical observation report
- Commonplace book
- Data analysis
- Debate article
- Description
- Design document/plan
- Diagram, plan, map
- Engineering log
- Environmental impact statement
- Evaluation of course
- Fabric swatchbook
- Family history
- Field trip report
- Film/video review
- Gantt chart
- Goals and objectives
- Graphics diagram
- H.I.P. article
- Handout
- Integration plan
- Inter-rater reliability test
- Internet research evaluation form
- Internship report
- Interview questions
- Journal article
- Journalism (story, article)
- Keys
- Lab notebook

- Learning plan
- Letter (cover letter, business letter)
- Library assignment
- Map assignment
- Medical record/medial report
- Mentor/teacher observation
- Meteorology forecast
- Military recommendation
- Module paper
- Negative/persuasive messages
- Newsletter production
- Officer evaluation support form
- Personal philosophical statement
- Personal project
- Potpourri assignment
- Pre-lab worksheet
- Presentation board
- Presentation package
- Question sets
- Review of literature
- Show-and-tell
- Speech
- Student information sheet
- Study problems, proofs
- Table of contents
- Table for lab report
- Technical report
- Technical drawing
- Test plan
- Tourist brochure
- Translation assignment
- User manual
- Validation document
- Vocabulary entries