



## Essays

Essays usually require no outside research (though they sometimes may). Generally, class essay assignments ask you to discuss in some depth a topic relevant to the course content. While analysis is the basis of most essays, other goals can be included, such as speculation, evaluation, etc. Essays require the ability to establish and maintain a focus on a topic. Most topics are too broad for a writer to cover completely: it is up to the individual writer to narrow the focus. Typically, an essay is organized by introducing your topic, explaining and supporting the focus, and then drawing some relevant conclusions from your discussion and analysis.

Because in an essay you have sufficient time and room to explore your ideas thoroughly, be sure to develop them adequately by balancing your more general assertions with specific evidence; this coverage might include textual evidence by way of quotations or paraphrases. As a rule, do not simply rely on generalizations to express your ideas. Also, because an essay tends to involve abstract concepts, it is always a good idea to make sure that those concepts are defined, so that both you and the reader share an impression of what you mean by an idea. Defining a concept does not necessarily mean quoting from a dictionary; rather, simply be sure that in some way you have adequately conveyed your meaning of abstract terms. The essay format can often provide the basis for other types of writing. Many other types of writing are based on analysis, as an essay generally is, and many also often rely on its overall organizational scheme.

**Written by Laurie Carlson**