

# Introduction to Informative Writing

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial introduces informative writing, which is sometimes referred to as expository writing. The importance of objectivity in informative writing is considered, along with examples of informative writing outside the academic context.

This tutorial provides an introduction to informative writing in three parts:

1. Informative Writing
2. Objectivity
3. Informative Writing Beyond Academia

## 1. Informative Writing

**Informative writing** is a common form of essay writing. Some informative writing is also academic writing; some is not. Informative writing *informs* readers about something; it describes or explains something to them. It is intended to convey information objectively, unlike argumentative writing, for example, which is persuasive. However, the line between these two forms is sometimes crossed: writers sometimes take a position on what they're writing about when writing informatively.

➦ **EXAMPLE** If a student decides to write an informative essay on treatment options for breast cancer, and her mother is currently undergoing this type of treatment, she may state the advantages and disadvantages of each treatment option in addition to listing them. By doing so, she would take a position. In addition to being informative, therefore, her essay would also be argumentative (and one that makes use of her personal context).

However, informative writing usually refers to writing that's not meant to convince readers of anything. Instead, it is intended to provide them with information about a subject.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Suppose a professor writes a short article for the campus website that describes careers for graduates of the program in which he teaches. It's likely that one of his goals is to persuade students to enroll in his classes, but his main purpose is to share information. This latter purpose is one of the primary signs of informative writing.



## TERM TO KNOW

## 2. Objectivity

Because the goal of informative writing is to inform readers about something, it's important for writers to be as objective as possible when writing in this way. They should do their best to set aside personal feelings and opinions and simply report information as clearly and as honestly as they can.



Complete objectivity is impossible, because writers always interpret information in terms of their perspective and experiences.

Striving for objectivity is a worthwhile task for informative writers. The best way to perform it is to use the rhetorical situation. Making a meta analysis of personal biases and assumptions, and addressing them accordingly, brings writers closer to an objective perspective, no matter the subject.

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## 3. Informative Writing Beyond Academia

Informative writing isn't limited to the academic context. It is one of the most common forms of written communication.

You'll find informative writing everywhere. Much of the writing done in the field of journalism, including newspaper and magazine articles on a variety of topics, is informative writing. Journalists are trained — and expected — to maintain objectivity when writing.

➞ **EXAMPLE** When you read an article about the new law your state's Governor just signed, you won't learn what the reporter thinks about it. The article provides facts about the new law, and perhaps some quotes (e.g., from experts, the governor, other officials, etc.), but does not include the writer's view of it. The article was intended to inform readers about the enactment of the law, not to persuade them to believe or respond in a certain way.

Other common forms of informative writing include instructions (e.g., recipes and "how-to" guides), and technical writing. Textbooks and encyclopedic entries are also examples of informative writing — everything from your 6th-grade math book to the Wikipedia page on Alaskan king crab. The purpose of all of these written works is to inform readers.

Scientific writing is another form of writing that is meant to convey information objectively.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A report written by a researcher who is investigating the effects of eating nothing but broccoli for a month will state exactly what the research did (and did not) reveal, and list accurate findings. It may also include a section (titled "Interpretations" or something similar) on possible applications of the research findings (e.g., to encourage people to eat broccoli). This kind of section would only present recommendations and conclusions based on the research results. As in the other examples, the primary purpose of a scientific report is to inform readers, and to present information objectively.



## SUMMARY

This tutorial considered informative writing by examining its goals (including objectivity) and indicating where and how it is used outside an academic setting.

Source: Adapted from Sophia Instructor Gavin McCall



## TERMS TO KNOW

### **Informative Writing**

Writing designed to inform, describe, or explain.