

## The Mini-essay Structure – the Recipe (Or any traditional multi-paragraph essay structure)

Expository writing – “exposes” a position on an issue. It literally “puts out” for scrutiny what you believe on the issue, (ex = out; pos = put, place).

- I. Introduction
  - a. Interest opener
    - i. General and topical; hooks the reader
  - b. A bit of background
    - i. Genre, story title, author, plot overview
  - c. Thesis statement – What you intend to show, prove, or discuss. It must be *provable, debatable, and provide focus*.
- II. Body Paragraph(s)
  - a. Topic sentence – with transition
    - i. Must “forward the thesis.” It is more specific than the thesis.
    - ii. Topic sentences must not recap plot or be a “history lesson”.
  - b. Arguments with support. Discuss your topic or issue.
    - i. Quotes, specific references to story or play. (See “Framing Quotations in Expository Writing” handout)
    - ii. Analysis and explanation – “proof” of the claim you made in your topic sentence.
  - c. Concluding statement

As a rule:

1. Do not begin your body paragraphs with a quote from the text. The first thought of a body paragraph should be your insight on the topic. Quotes are used, then, to support that good insight.
2. Do not “dangle” quotes at the end of a paragraph. The last thought of a paragraph should be your good summary.

- III. Conclusion
  - a. Includes “reminder” of the thesis
  - b. Can (and should) generalize to the “real world” and/or discuss universal implications or truths
  - c. Should not introduce any new topics

When you hear “formal essay” you should remember to avoid the “big five:”

1. No first person – I prefer you avoid it in formal essays
2. No second person – You shouldn’t use it here
3. No contractions – They aren’t necessary and give your essay a less formal sound
4. No colloquialisms – seems like you guys love these things
5. No past tense – These characters lived long ago, but only in our hearts. In print they live!

## Framing Quotations in Expository Writing

Quotations are a must in good expository writing. When used well, they show that you can go to the source to make your point. They give you credibility. Follow these guidelines for framing quotations to avoid most of the pitfalls of quotation use and strengthen your exposition.

1. **Introduce the quotation.** This means “set the scene.” Give the reader a bit of **context** about what is going on in the story, both in plot and themes if necessary.
  - a. Context about the quotation should be given in terms of the story not the page number or act/scene.
2. **Tag and cite the quotation.** Once you’ve told us where we are going (by introducing the quotation) be sure to properly use the quote.
  - a. All quotations in expository writing should be connected to your words. Usually this is with a “tag” (he says, /she says,). Tagging a quotation makes it yours! In this way it becomes part of one of your sentences and we know who is speaking.
  - b. Tags should be in present tense unless you are dealing with historical events.
  - c. Citations should go at the end of the quotation, inside end punctuation, except question marks and exclamation marks which are a part of the quoted person’s sentence.
  - d. Begin the sentence after the quotation with capital letter.
  - e. Some examples...  
“...last words of my quotation” (pg. 36). First words of next sentence....  
or for a play: “...last words of my quotation from a play” (3.2.82-117). First words of next sentence....  
or if the quotation is a question: “...last words of my quotation?” (pg. 36) First words of next....
3. **Analyze the quotation.** Explain how it shows or proves your thesis. Don’t assume the argument is made by the quotation. You make the argument – it’s your essay!

In general, for expository writing:

- Quotations should be used to help make or clarify your point. Never use a quotation to relate facts or clear “givens.”
- Never start a paragraph with a quotation. (The interest opener is the exception.)
- Never end a paragraph with a quotation. (Your expert analysis should be the last thing we consider.
- Use only as much of the quotation as you need. (Ellipses are fine, but you **must** remain true to the author’s original intent.)
- “Block” quotations which will run longer than three lines of your text.

Block style:

\_\_\_\_\_ (your text)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ [tag]:

-still need a present tense “tag” and “citation”

\_\_\_\_\_ (the quotation)

-no quotation marks needed

\_\_\_\_\_

-single space “block”

\_\_\_\_\_

-indent block ½ in. on each side

\_\_\_\_\_ (pg. \_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_

-start new paragraph for your analysis

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Example of an expository paragraph with a properly framed quotation....

The Nurse serves as comic relief because we can laugh at her simpleton ways. She says one word, but means another, trying to be helpful, but coming off sounding foolish. When the Nurse responds to Mercutio's taunting comments she says, "I pray you, sir, what saucy merchant was this that was so full of his ropery?" (Act 2, sc. 4, lines 142-143) What the Nurse actually means is "roguery," which is the talk and conduct of a rascal. When we laugh at the Nurse's mis-statements we forget, if only for a moment, the tragedy we see unfolding before our eyes.

Mark Antony gains the respect of the plebeians through his eloquent speech at Caesar's funeral, after Caesar has been murdered by Cassius and his fellow conspirators. Antony played the audience like a fiddle, bringing pity to himself and Caesar. He makes the word "honorable" into a curse, turning the people against Brutus. As part of his strategy, he ridicules himself, and admires Brutus' great speaking skills, which he claims he can never live up to. During his eulogy to Caesar, Antony says, "I have neither writ, nor words, nor worth, nor action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech to stir men's blood' I only speak right on" (Act 3, sc. 2, lines 271-271). Humbling himself before the crowd makes Antony seem like one of the people. Antony suggests that someone who is "one of them" would never mislead them, or lie to them – unlike Brutus, who is a senator and a great orator, therefore is not to be trusted.