



Exploratory Essay Handout

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Select an arguable subject on which there are multiple perspectives that can be researched.

Avoid selecting a topic that has limited evidence or which only proposes a “for or against” stance. Effects of divorce on a family unit or how health care costs should be paid for are both broad topics which a writer can compile multiple perspectives on. For example, consider the hypothetical topic: “How can students avoid procrastination?”

Step 2: Research the issue and select at least three perspectives to explore in the paper. When conducting research, examine different theories or experiments regarding the subject, and identify the reasons why people favor or oppose the topic. Keep in mind that *this is not an argument essay*. Rather than explaining the various sides of an issue and advocating for one over another, an exploratory essay aims to identify and break down as many perspectives on a particular issue as possible. For example, several solutions to avoiding procrastination include scheduling events in a planner, trying different kinds of caffeine, or sleeping at least eight hours every night.

Step 3: Establish the audience and constraints. Identify which groups or individuals adhere to which perspectives and why. Constraints include any and all information that explains why certain values, beliefs, and circumstances persuade groups or individuals to maintain their perspectives. For example, some students believe that maintaining a physical planner is the best way to avoid procrastination because they remember things best by writing them down.

Step 4: Answer the questions proposed by accumulated research. After narrowing down at least three perspectives to explore, decide how to explain any questions the research may prompt. For example, one perspective regarding avoiding procrastination is that students can maintain a planner to organize their

priorities. In this case, state not only that maintaining a planner is one of the theories on how to avoid procrastination but use research to explain why some people hold to that belief.

WRITING PROCESS

Introduction: Begin by giving a brief overview of the subject and its importance. Provide any pertinent background information that will aid the reader in understanding the significance of the topic. Then, in the thesis statement, mention the various perspectives regarding the topic which will be explained throughout the paper. For more information, please see the UWC’s [“Writing a Thesis”](#) handout and [“Writing an Introduction”](#) handout.

Ex: “Parents, students, and experts in the field maintain the belief that students can avoid procrastination by scheduling events in a planner, trying different kinds of caffeine, or by sleeping at least eight hours every night.”

Body Paragraphs: There should be at least one body paragraph for every perspective laid out in the thesis statement. Following the example thesis statement, the first body paragraph would explore the theory that scheduling events in a planner helps avoid procrastination and identify which audience abides by that view and why. The second paragraph would then detail the perspective of how different kinds of caffeine can help circumvent procrastination. Finally, after the second point has been explored, the next paragraph(s) would describe how sleeping at least eight hours every night aids in avoiding procrastination.

Conclusion: The conclusion paragraph should summarize all the explored perspectives on the subject without restating them word-for-word. Likewise, the thesis should be emphasized again but not repeated verbatim. For more information on creating a conclusion, please see the UWC’s [“Writing a Conclusion”](#) handout.

Ex: “There are multiple opinions regarding how people of all ages can avoid procrastination, yet none of them, although adequately substantiated with evidence, have proven that their method is effective.”