

## SOME DIFFERENT TYPES OF PAPERS

There are many types of academic papers. Listed below are the ones you will be most likely to write.

- 1. Descriptive Essay:**  
This type of paper is probably the easiest to write. Essentially what you do is describe something or tell a story. This is sometimes called a narrative essay. Usually you do not have to make an argument in this type of paper. English and History profs often assign this type of paper.
- 2. Analytical Essay:**  
This is a very common type of assignment. You are asked to read 1 or more articles or books and discuss them in terms of a particular issue or question. This type of assignment can be applied to almost anything. Typically you must take a position or make an argument. This type of paper is popular with all types of profs.
- 3. Book Review/Critique:**  
This is almost a combination of a descriptive essay and an analytical essay. It is NOT a book report. The basic form is to briefly summarize a book's content and then to *evaluate* it; that is, you give your opinion about what is valuable about it and what could have been better. Very often an instructor will give you specific points or questions to consider when you read and judge the book. This usually is a History or English assignment.
- 4. Research Paper:**  
These papers are not assigned as much as they used to be. They are rarely less than ten pages in length. You are required to choose and r.e.s.e.a.r.c.h a topic. That means going to the library, using the Net, conducting interviews and the like. These take A LOT of time. Usually you get to pick your own topic or sometimes the instructor will have a list of acceptable topics. These papers ALWAYS require a bibliography, a works-cited page and some form of citation. Sometimes your instructor might refer to this as a *term paper*. Every kind of class imaginable could have this kind of paper.
- 5. Persuasive/Argumentative Essay:**  
This essay is designed to have you take a position on a particular topic and make an argument about it. The idea is to present evidence and argument in such a way that you could persuade someone to see things your way. History, English and Communications profs often assign this kind of essay.

**NOTES:** Of course, there are other types of writing. Although science or math classes almost never require essay or research writing, they often require you to record and write up the results of lab work. Sometimes you might be asked to write a short paper on an experiment or how a particular math solution is achieved. The key to this kind of writing is to keep good notes and to write as simply and clearly as possible. Keep things organized. Use examples.

Also, remember that different disciplines—that is to say, English, History, Sociology, Psychology—often have very different requirements. What your history professor means when she says “analytical essay” and what your psych prof means when he says “analytical essay” might be very different. ALWAYS get as much information as possible from your instructor or TA. You can expect that EVERY History or English class you take will require at least one writing assignment.

