

Academic Writing Presentation

*Before beginning the presentation, obtain a class roster from the professor if possible.

Slide One: Five Paragraph Essay

Begin the discussion by asking what the first type of essay is they learn to write in high school: the five paragraph essay. Then, proceed by asking the students to tell you what goes into the sections of a five paragraph essay starting with the first paragraph, then the body (second, third, and fourth paragraph), and finally the concluding paragraph. This is a good way to warm up the students to participating which will be important for the rest of the presentation.

I usually round out talking about the first slide by discussing the following: The five paragraph essay is commonly taught in high school as it is an important step in learning to become a good writer. You are telling your teacher that you understand and know what you are talking about. But, when producing an “academic” paper, you have to take it to the next level. Being able to apply, analyze, and *create* something new using your information and research is what you are expected to do at the college level.

Slide Two: Objects

Explain to the students that they need to get out a piece of paper and pencil for the workshop. Point out the two objects on the board, and tell them they need to pick one (either the pencil or the broom), and stick with it throughout the entire workshop.

Slide Three: Descriptive Writing

First, explain to the students that they will need to write in third person because nearly every academic paper they will write in college, if not all, will be in third person. Next, ask them to skip three or four lines down from the top of their paper. Now, tell them to describe the object they chose (pencil or broom) as an artist would, using the five senses. Stress to them to not overthink it, just simply describe their object by telling what it looks like, feels like, etc.

Allow the students a few minutes to write their descriptions, asking them to look up at you when they are done so you know when they are finished. Now, ask for volunteers to read their descriptions. Be loose about it, and encourage them to participate. If you have no takers, utilize the class list and pick one at random. After a couple of students read their descriptions, explain to them the reasoning behind this step: It is important to describe the object you chose as if the person reading your paper has never seen that object. In an academic paper, no matter what topic you are writing about, those who read it do not necessarily know anything about the topic. Pretend whoever reading your paper is completely ignorant of the topic. It is important to make sure the reader is on a level playing field, and knows exactly the nature of the topic being discussed. You cannot assume they know anything about your subject.

Slide Four: Analytical Writing

Now, ask the students to write about their objects like scientists, by answering questions such as what is the object's purpose, what does it do, and where does it come from? Allow them a few minutes again to write their answers. Again, have a few different students read from their paper, and make sure they followed the guidelines you provided.

Next, explain the purpose of this step. In this step, they are providing the provable facts about their objects. In an academic paper, this would be where they would lay out their research on their topic, and information that is relevant to their argument or discussion. This step has to be established clearly in order to move on to the next step when writing an academic paper.

Slide Five: Persuasive Writing

For this step, explain to the students that this is where they take it to the next level. I usually let them know that Missouri State is a public affairs university, placing high importance on ethical leadership and community engagement among other things. In some classes, professors will ask their students to tie in the public affairs mission. So, in this step, have them imagine that their object is an emblem on a poster for social change, or a "call to action". They need to think in the abstract, and develop an entirely new idea about their object. Allow them a little more time for this step; once most are done, have students again read what they have written.

Explain to the students that this is the step in their writing an academic paper in which they are creating new ideas. They have to engage in higher order thinking and use their ideas, coupled with their research, to persuade the reader that what they are saying is right.

Slide Six: Bloom's Taxonomy

Use this slide to explain to students why they are forced to write these types of papers. Bloom's Taxonomy is structured like a pyramid, with each tier encompassing a set of learning goals. The bottom tier, knowledge, involves recalling information, memorization, and listing. The next one, comprehension, involves describing, discussing, and explaining information. Students usually develop skills from these bottom two tiers when in a purely lecture course with multiple choice, objective type tests (and in high school). To reach the next tier, application, students have to be able to apply their knowledge to solve problems. This is why some general education courses like chemistry and physics require a lab. You learn about these subjects in lecture, and then you actually apply your knowledge in the lab to solve problems and/or blow stuff up.

So, how do we reach the rest of the learning goals? Writing! This is why writing is so important. When you write a good academic paper, you are analyzing information, defending and supporting your point of view, and/or creating a new idea. This is why writing is becoming more prevalent in all majors. Even majors like accounting, nursing, and others you wouldn't necessarily see as majors involving writing are requiring more papers from their students.

Slide Seven: Narrative Writing

Now, this is where you complete your paper and create a finished product. Now that the body of the paper is written, go back and form the introduction with your thesis statement, and the conclusion. Some write their thesis before they really begin writing the body of their paper. If you have to do this, that is okay. But, be sure that if you find evidence that your original thesis isn't entirely correct, that you will change it. Do not step into the trap of making your research reflect your thesis, make your thesis reflect your research and findings.

Also, you need to create transitions between your paragraphs, and make sure the paper has good flow. Tie your paper up like a *pretty little bow*.

Once these things are done, clean up your paper; COPS (Capitalization, Organization, Punctuation, and Spelling).

Slide Eight: Bear CLAW Services

Plug the bear CLAW a little, especially the writing center.

Tips for an Effective Presentation

Make the presentation fun, lively. Encourage discussion and interaction from the students as much as possible. Interject jokes when possible.

Walk around the room while students are writing during the workshop. If there are students that won't stop talking or won't listen, I usually don't acknowledge them directly but just stand right beside them/between them while I am talking.

If you're having fun, chances are that most of the students will enjoy it too. The more they enjoy the presentation, the more they will likely pay attention and learn from it.