

HOW TO WRITE ANALYSIS

Writing analysis, like any writing, is a personal process. With experience, each writer discovers the best way that he/she prepares, drafts, and hones analysis. Nonetheless, there are seven basic steps to all analytic writing.

1. **ASSESS** what your reader needs.
 - Put yourself in your reader's shoes.
 - Think of the scope of the topic and key questions to answer.
 - Determine what the reader *really* needs – not just what is requested. Don't pander.
2. **GATHER** your information, **ABSORB** it, and **CHALLENGE** it.
 - Take only the level of notes that you need to establish landmarks in your data.
 - Don't build your information linearly; build it more like a Christmas tree.
 - Critique your sources as you read; ask how they're influencing you.
 - Mark questionable information.
 - Make note of information gaps.
3. **LOOK FOR PATTERNS** in your information.
 - Find common points and parallels in your data.
 - Ask again if your sources lean one way or other.
 - Identify gaps again.
4. Formulate your **HYPOTHESIS** and build your **ARGUMENTS**.
 - Draft your thesis sentence.
 - Write sentences capturing your main points.
 - Marshal facts to support your arguments.
 - Start building your paragraphs. (Tick formats work well.) Keep them soft, non-linear.
5. **TEST** and **BUILD** the bond between your hypothesis, arguments, and facts.
 - Ask yourself honestly if your thesis holds up.
 - Reorder data and make adjustments for maximum strength.
 - Go gather more information to test and strengthen your case.
 - Adjust, adjust, adjust.
6. Focus on **LANGUAGE** and **STRUCTURE**
 - Polish the thesis sentence and check it for consistency with arguments and facts.
 - Check the structure of sentences and paragraphs.
 - Edit, edit, edit.
7. Take a **BREATH** and **REPEAT** steps 4 and 5 until you're happy.

Basic, Simple Structure

- Grab attention and give BLUF
- Identify drivers – explaining what's happening and why
- Say where things are headed
- Name "wildcards" if meaningful
- Hit the reader between the eyes with the implications