

## Middle School Expository Writing

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### Overview:

This seven-week, live mini-course will introduce your middle schooler to the basics of expository writing. Consider this your training wheels for research writing so that you can hit the ground running when you get to high school.

This is an essential skillset for all students, and especially for those who plan to take intermediate and advanced writing classes in high school. This is a great starting point for any middle schooler.

Each week centers on a different guiding question and some examples include, “How do I choose a topic?”, “How do I summarize what I’ve been reading?”, and “How do I know my sources are trustworthy?” We begin at the very beginning—*What is expository writing?*—and students conclude the course with a five-paragraph expository essay.

Expository writing is designed to be shared, which is why we focus not only on clear, well-sourced writing, but also on how to talk about what students are writing. Just as important as the writing is being able to clearly communicate that writing to a variety of audiences. To practice that skillset, students also produce a five-slide research presentation based on their research.

### Course Materials:

All texts provided by instructor via Canvas. Please ensure you that your computer includes software that allows your student to open, read, and annotate PDFs and documents (.doc, .docx, .pdf).

The following materials are **mandatory** and provide a smoother online learning experience:

- High speed internet connection
- A webcam or computer with internal camera
- A headset with headphones and a microphone that plugs into your computer’s headphone jack

## Grading Policy

Grading percentage weights:

Major Assessments (Tests, Papers, and Projects)	50%
Supporting Assessments (Quizzes and Minor Responses)	25%
Homework & Participation (Substantive, weekly responses & timely homework)	25%

**A student's final grade in this course will be determined using the following grading scale:**

98–100 = A+

93–97 = A

90–92 = A-

88–89 = B+

83–87 = B

80–82 = B-

78–79 = C+

73–77 = C

70–72 = C-

60–69 = D

Below 60 = Failing. No credit.

Grades are calculated using total points.

Students will be asked to demonstrate proficiency through written assignments, quizzes and tests.

**Major assessments** consist of formal assessments at the end of each unit. These tests may include but are not limited to the following: vocabulary, short answers, multiple choice, and essay questions. Published papers and quarterly projects may substitute for tests but are weighted equally.

**Supporting assessments** include assessments to demonstrate knowledge and/or mastery of prior classroom instruction

**Homework and participation** will consist of practicing skills introduced in weekly classes, generally through online discussions and homework as well as thoughtful contributions and questions in weekly classes.

**Late work policy:** Late work will be accepted (at the discretion of the instructor) for up to one week after deadline. Late work will receive a grade but will not receive feedback. **All assignments are due on Fridays at noon EST. Assignments submitted after that time will be considered late unless an extension is negotiated with the instructor.**

### Academic Integrity

All students are expected to adhere to a code of academic honesty. Cheating or plagiarizing (the use of others' words or interpretations without giving credit) will not be tolerated. Proper documentation style will be covered thoroughly in class; therefore, students will know how to avoid this grave offense. Consequences for an infringement of this type will be determined by the instructor at the time of the offense.

### Gentle Reminders

(With great thanks to **Christine Hong**, University of California, whose [syllabus \(Links to an external site.\)](#) inspired this section)

- Please communicate with me exclusively through the Canvas messaging system once your login is set up. This way, we have a dedicated line of communication that I check and respond to daily; I ask that you do the same.
- I typically respond to emails from 10am to 6pm on weekdays and usually within 48 hours. Please allow that time to elapse before sending a second message on the same topic.
- E-mail etiquette: I am not available to give extensive feedback and editing via e-mail but I do provide extensive feedback via Canvas and comments on your document for the draft and final copy. That said, should you need to notify me concerning an absence or wish to contact me about a brief matter, feel free to use e-mail for that purpose.
- Zoom discussions are optional and they are recorded each week for students to review as necessary. Live Zoom lectures will be held each of the weeks of the course.
- While grades are a necessary evil of academic life, don't let them become the focal point of your experience in this class. Rather than obsess over your grade on an individual paper, focus on your overall growth as a writer over the course of the semester. One surefire way to mature as a writer is to be flexible and self-reflexive about your writing. Although you probably won't and shouldn't always agree with the feedback from your peers and from me, keep in mind that we function as outside readers of your work and therefore furnish you with a valuable external point of view on your work. Also, be open to the idea of revision. Ultimately, being able to see your own work with a good measure of critical distance is essential to the evolution of your writing.

- For extra safety (technological failures can never be predicted), save all major assignments on disk, to your hard drive, to the cloud, or on an external hard drive in case of loss. Keeping an extra hard copy of each of assignment is also a good idea. This will also be important if you need to collect artifacts for a portfolio. Please don't throw away anything until you have received a final grade for the course.
- The syllabus is open to alteration. We'll see how things unfold throughout the course of the term and play it by ear. I'll make certain to announce any changes as clearly as possible.

### Tentative Course Schedule

Detailed reading, writing, and response assignments will be distributed as each course segment begins.

We will try to adhere to this schedule as much as possible but please be aware some changes will probably take place during the course of the school year. Each student is responsible to have read all readings and completed all assignments by the date they are listed. I reserve the right to make adjustments to this syllabus in order to adjust to the needs of the course and students.

### Course schedule:

#### Middle School Expository Writing

Week	Guiding question	Product stage
1	What is expository writing?	Venn diagram: expository writing vs. another type of writing  Identify two examples of expository writing and explain your reasoning
2	How do I choose a topic?	Questionnaire (KWL)
3	How do I find resources?	Identify sources  Checklist

	How do I know my sources are trustworthy?	
4	How do I give proper credit to other authors?	MLA references page Introductory sentences
5	How do I summarize what I've been reading?	Summarize five sources Checklist/rubric
6	How do I put my ideas together?	Introductory and closing paragraphs
7	How do I share my ideas?	Five-slide PowerPoint with main ideas

Weekly assignments will usually include elements of the following (unless otherwise specified):

- Assigned reading
- 2-3 hours of collecting, drafting, or revising OR reading, analysis, and note-taking
- Preparation for final projects
- Participation in weekly class meeting