

## DRAFTING

Drafting an essay, a narrative, a description, or a critical analysis can be challenging. But, it is definitely not impossible. Hopefully, you have started the process of writing with some prewriting (to help you to plan and to organize ideas initially). If so, then, you should be adequately prepared to start writing the longer paper.

The DRAFTING stage of the Writing Process is all about setting and achieving goals. However, it is also about knowing your limits for the time you are putting into the paper.

For example, if you are writing a ten page assignment for your instructor, then the goal may be about length rather than quality initially. Reaching ten pages is a good goal for starters. Honestly, you can always work on revisiting the elements of style and work on quality later; the stage of REWRITING serves this purpose (i.e. cleaning up your draft).

What is realistic for a beginning draft?

Well, here are some realistic thoughts for a draft:

1. Drafts are allowed to be drafts (Be realistic: There is nothing finished or polished about a draft -> If you start by thinking your first draft is the last draft, you may be setting yourself up for serious frustration).
2. Drafts are allowed to be the culmination of your prewriting and new thoughts (that is, using anatomy as an analogy: You can start with your prewriting as a skeleton and carefully add the muscle).
3. Drafts are allowed to have holes (Your draft does not need to address every single issues or thought initially. Leaving holes for material to go later is a realistic idea).
4. And, vice-versa, drafts are allowed to include every single detail you can muster (REWRITING is for cutting and editing, so let your intellectual stream of consciousness rule). A word of caution: If you decide to write as much as you can, try to have some headings (e.g. introduction, body, conclusion) to delineate what goes where and to help you in keeping some semblance of arrangement.

### **(DRAFTING) DESCRIPTION**

Your instructor may ask you to try your abilities at writing by asking you to start by writing a description.

The focus in a description is often simple subject matter (e.g. a single person, place, and thing). You simply write about what you can sense, induce, or deduce about the subject matter.

## **(DRAFTING) NARRATIVES**

Narratives are personal, detail-oriented texts, which describe a sequence of usually real (sometimes fictional or imaginary) events involving animate characters. Some narratives are historical; some are current; and, others connected to observations and commentary about people, places, things, or concepts.

The word, narrative, comes from *Latin*, meaning “to know.” Usually, people consider narratives to be stories with two layers: 1) a surface-layer with a careful description of events and characters revealed by a narrator; and, 2) a layer underneath the surface containing an underlying meaning, lesson/moral (making it didactic), or otherwise deep contemplation about the conditions and/or experiences of the author with a person, place, thing, or idea. In other words, narratives can be didactic, informative, or simply exist for aesthetic reasons.

While *most* narratives thrive on talking about the self from the first-person point of view (I, me, my), others thrive on different points of view. Some authors choose to write narratives which talk from the perspective of objects or other participants who witness events, making the genre and the form of the narrative increasingly complex.

Consider this short, third-person narrative from the Greek writer, Aesop:

“The Crow and the Pitcher”

A Crow, half-dead with thirst, came upon a Pitcher which had once been full of water; but when the Crow put its beak into the mouth of the Pitcher he found that only very little water was left in it, and that he could not reach far enough down to get at it. He tried, and he tried, but at last had to give up in despair. Then a thought came to him, and he took a pebble and dropped it into the Pitcher. Then he took another pebble and dropped it into the Pitcher. Then he took another pebble and dropped that into the Pitcher. Then he took another pebble and dropped that into the Pitcher. Then he took another pebble and dropped that into the Pitcher. Then he took another pebble and dropped that into the Pitcher. At last, at last, he saw the water mount up near him; and after casting in a few more pebbles he was able to quench his thirst and save his life.

Aesop’s Underlying Meaning or Moral: Necessity is the mother of invention...

## BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NARRATIVES

Speaker or Main Character

Moderate Description of People, Places, Concepts, and Things

Side Characters (sometimes referred to as actors/subjects)

Simple Setting (Space and Time)

Plot (e.g. Chronological Sequence of Events)

Dialogue

Simple Account

## ADVANCED CHARACTERISTICS OF NARRATIVES

Narration of the Narrator (Point of View)

Thick Description of People, Places, Concepts, and Things

Alternating Setting (Space and Time)

Non-Chronological Sequence of Events – Flashbacks

Rising and Falling Action/Irony/Suspense

Ideological Stance (characters act a particular way towards people, places, concepts, and things - this attitude is recorded in gestures and actions towards others)

Changes in Ideological Stances

Focus/Purpose/Meaning is mentioned or explored (sometimes embedded or sometimes overt)

### PURPOSE?

Many narratives are based on observations, while others are based on recollection. Oftentimes, people writing in a diary or journal recount events through many different forms of the narrative, while academics like scientists may use narratives to describe the outcome of experiments. What more? Narratives can be used by lawyers (e.g. the testimony of a client or witness). Moreover, narratives can be used as points of reference for other discourse (proposals, argumentative essays, and more).

### **(DRAFTING) EXPOSITION**

Expository writing is more or less explanatory writing; that is, expositions focus on explaining a particular process or an idea.

If you have ever written a basic research report, then you have completed some expository writing. More than often, a work of exposition focuses on finding the denotations associated with a particular person, place, or thing. However, unlike a description, which focuses on sensory issues; unlike a narrative, which focuses on events or characters, expositions usually report just the facts. There is no motive or intent other than to inform.

Research reports as used by scientists often use expository strategies.

For example, here are two common forms found in the Applied and Natural Sciences, Abstracts (which includes summaries and reviews), and the IMRAD (or I'M RAD) form.

### ABSTRACTS

The form contains these characteristics:

- The word "Abstract" or "Summary" in bold printed above.
- Summaries and abstracts are 250 words or less (unless otherwise specified by a RFP - Request for Proposal, or other guidelines).
- Summaries and Abstracts are typically formatted as one single-spaced block-style paragraph (or block)
- Summaries/Abstracts should provide a brief sketch of the document/artifact
- Most are written in the past tense
- Should be a self-contained discourse (works on its own) and should contain no bibliographic, figure, or table references.
- The language should be familiar to the reader/audience.

-All abbreviations and complicated (or new) terms are defined.

When writing the abstract, be concise: If you can tell your story in 100 words, then do not use 200.

### HUMOR

About being concise...

Author and scientist, Robert Day, presents a good analogy for writing summaries/abstracts in his book *How to Write & Publish a Scientific Paper*:

The story goes like this: One night a symphony orchestra was scheduled to play Beethoven's famous "Ninth Symphony." Before the performance, the string bass players happened to be chatting among themselves, and one of the bass players reminded the others that there is a long "rest" for the bass players towards the conclusion of the Beethoven's Ninth. One bassist said, "Tonight, instead of sitting on the stage looking dumb all the time, why don't we sneak off the stage, go out the back door, go to the bar across the street, and belt down a few?" They all agreed. That night, when "rest" time came, they indeed snuck off the stage, went to the bar, and knock back about four strong tequilas each. One bass player said, "Well, it's about time we headed back for the finale." Whereupon another bassist said, "Not to worry." After we decided to do this, I went up to the conductor's stand and, at the place in the conductor's score where our rest ends, I tied a bunch of strings around his score. It will take him a few minutes to untie those knots. "Let's have another!" And, they did.

If I were writing the summary for this story, then I would have to write: "It's the last of the Ninth, the score it tied, and the basses are loaded."

Basically, there are three types of summaries/abstracts:

1. A descriptive (or indicative) summary/abstract resembles a table of contents, except that it is situated in paragraph form. As the summary/abstract presents each section or chapter, the author includes some important details about it.
2. An informative summary/abstract presents a greatly compressed (concise) form of the article or book. This form may include the most important facts, figures, data, or other information presented in the paper. Unlike a mystery novel, it does not hold back any information.
3. An evaluative summary/abstract provides a brief summary while including the writer's personal assessment of the original document.

### ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

An annotated bibliography is a document which essentially contains a collection of short abstracts/summaries in relation to a particular field/topic. "Short" usually means 150 words or less per entry. The focus is usually on brevity (hence, less is more, although focus and detail are crucial).

## Traits/Form

- Annotations (or entries) are similar to abstracts/summaries, yet they work to reflect on the usefulness of the contents as well as summarizing them.
- Typically, the style may be the same as a descriptive abstract (unless the instructor or institution demands something different).
- Annotations are concise (consider brevity and clarity carefully).
- Annotations contain a citation above (use a source documentation system consistently, either MLA, APA, CSE, or other)
- Annotations contain a short block of information which reflects on the usefulness of the article/piece while providing a short summary of its contents.
- Successive entries may be numbered or not (alphabetized or not), or they may appear in order of importance. Choose at least one organizational method (numerical or alphabetical).
- Some form of emphasis is given to the citation (e.g. bold, underlining, italics, or color), while the entry is written in a regular font (making it easier to locate specific entries).
- Longer Annotated Bibliographies contain either an index or a table of contents. Sometimes, they may contain both.

## IMRAD or I'M RAD DOCUMENT

Writers are usually called upon to document several types of processes. One of which observes the scientific method (which involves deriving a hypothesis, experimenting or testing the hypothesis, and formulating a theory given the outcomes of the experimentation). In this process, a specific organization for writing is used. We call this the IMRAD method or the I'M RAD (!) method. The mnemonic acronym stands for INTRODUCTION, METHODS AND MATERIALS, RESULTS, and DISCUSSION.

When using this form, you place all of the corresponding information under the corresponding heading.

### *INTRODUCTION*

- Explains what you are researching
- Includes a pertinent review of the literature (any previous scientific/popular work on the concept). Make a note, oftentimes scientists will include a totally new section under the heading of REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE or LITERATURE REVIEW.
- Briefly summarizes what you plan to do, how you plan to do it, and any results found (unlike a mystery novel, you provide all of the pertinent information up front, which in turn helps another researcher to quickly determine by abstract or by introduction if the piece and its findings are useful (as opposed to reading the entire piece).
- Discusses the purpose for the research (objective and subjective)

## *METHODS and MATERIALS (a.k.a. METHODOLOGY)*

-Explains in-depth the process used to conduct experimentation, observations, or other scientific method.

-Lists all materials used in the process (in some IMRAD documents, researchers even include where they purchased the material and the specific manufacturers – for example, 50ml Capacity Beaker, 10ml Graduation, 1lbs. from Henry's Hydrological Supply Company. The point is to allow another group of scientists to recreate and reassess the experiment and obtain the same findings.

-Lists all contextual information (e.g. where the experiments/observations took place, who were the subjects, and any information needed to repeat the research).

-Process steps are presented incrementally and chronologically.

-Cautions/Warnings/Notes are presented throughout, when necessary.

-In addition, some scientists like to put intermediate observations along with the process (for example: When one has accomplished task B, you will notice a pungent smell and distinct green color appearing in the beaker).

-Any mathematical equations used should be mentioned and explained in this section.

-Recognize any potential sources of error.

## *RESULTS (a.k.a. DATA, FINDINGS)*

-Any data, findings, equations, or other matter obtained through experimentation should be put into this section and explained thoroughly. The results section is usually the shortest or the longest section of the piece.

-Discuss any bad outcomes at length.

## *DISCUSSION (a.k.a. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS)*

-This section answers the question: What do we do with the findings?

-Use this section to formulate recommendations or elaborate on further research that is needed (be specific as much as possible).

-If an experiment and results do not turn out well, it is perfectly okay to admit defeat and suggest that “although the findings do not cannot support the formulation of a theory, further research may be needed to obtain satisfactory results.” Or “further research may be needed since X and Y interfered with the outcomes of the experiment (cite significant sources of error)”

-Discuss how the research process and/or findings lead to positive/negative outcomes as related to the purpose/intent of the research.