



# What is Writing?

So... what *is* writing, really?

## Introduction

Essentially, writing is just turning thoughts into words, but honestly, it's so much bigger than that. Writing is everywhere in our lives, and we use it in ways we don't even stop to think about.

- It's how we **talk to people we may never meet in person**, like sending out a tweet that someone across the world might read or picking up a book written hundreds of years ago and still connecting with the author's voice.
- It's how we **organize our own messy brains**, whether it's scribbling a grocery list, jotting notes in a class, or keeping a journal where we work through our thoughts.
- And it's how we **influence, motivate, or inspire others**, through ads that convince us what to buy, essays that push for change, speeches that rally people together, or even song lyrics that stick in our heads and move us emotionally.

Writing doesn't have to be formal to count. When you send a quick text like "*Be there in 10*," that's writing. When Shakespeare sat down and wrote *Hamlet*, that was writing too. The only real difference is **purpose, audience, and style**. One is about telling your friend you're on the way, the other is about creating a timeless story.

# Why do we write? (Purposes)

## 1) To think and learn (writing = thinking on paper)

Writing helps us clarify fuzzy ideas and make decisions.

- **Example:** A student free-writes to figure out a thesis: “I think social media isn’t the problem, our notification settings are.”
- **Example:** A scientist keeps a lab notebook to notice a pattern in failed trials.

## 2) To remember and record

We capture what happened so we (and others) can use it later.

- **Example:** Meeting minutes that list decisions and next steps.
- **Example:** A travel journal noting places, costs, and highlights.

## 3) To inform or explain (expository)

We share knowledge clearly and accurately.

- **Example:** “To reset your router, hold the button for 10 seconds until the light blinks.”
- **Example:** A history article explaining how the New Deal reshaped U.S. policy.

## 4) To persuade or advocate

We try to change minds or spur action.

- **Example:** A cover letter: “My analytics work increased retention by 17%; here’s how I can do the same for your team.”
- **Example:** An op-ed urging voters to support a local library millage.

## 5) To entertain (narrative, humor, drama)

We delight, surprise, or immerse readers.

- **Example:** A short story that begins, “On the day gravity took a break, coffee shops became museums.”
- **Example:** A stand-up set written with tight setups and punchlines.

## 6) To express and process emotions

We make sense of our inner life.

- **Example:** A journal entry about moving away from home.
- **Example:** A poem: “I carry tomorrow in my pocket like a folded note.”

## 7) To connect and build community

We maintain relationships and create shared culture.

- **Example:** A welcome post in a class forum: “I’m Sam, into robotics and ramen. Anyone else prototype at 2 a.m.?”
- **Example:** A newsletter that updates volunteers and thanks contributors.

## 8) To coordinate work and solve problems

We align people, timelines, and tasks.

- **Example:** A project brief: goals, scope, deliverables, deadlines, owners.
- **Example:** A bug report with steps to reproduce and expected behavior.

## 9) To document, protect, and comply

We formalize agreements and rights.

- **Example:** A lease that spells out rent, deposits, and repair responsibilities.
- **Example:** Policies and SOPs that ensure safety and consistency.

## 10) To build identity and brand

We shape how others see us (and how we see ourselves).

- **Example:** A bio: “Educator and game designer focused on accessible, play-based learning.”
- **Example:** A brand voice guide: friendly, plain-language, action-oriented.

## 11) To imagine and design futures

We prototype ideas before they exist.

- **Example:** A game design doc outlining mechanics, loops, and art style.
- **Example:** A speculative essay: “What if cities treated shade like infrastructure?”

## 12) To open doors (opportunity writing)

We compete for resources and recognition.

- **Example:** A grant proposal with a need statement, methods, and evaluation plan.
- **Example:** A scholarship essay tying personal story to academic goals.

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### Same topic, different purposes (quick demo: “recycling”)

- **Inform:** “Plastics #1 and #2 are accepted curbside; rinse containers first.”
- **Persuade:** “If every dorm recycled weekly, we’d cut landfill waste by 40%, join the Friday pickup.”
- **Entertain:** “In our house, the bin is a dragon that eats soda cans.”
- **Coordinate:** “Team A collects data; Team B designs posters; deadline is Oct 3.”

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## Writing Styles (the *how*)

Writing style is basically the *way* a writer chooses to express their ideas. It’s about tone, word choice, structure, and purpose. While there are many nuances, in most writing instructions we focus on **four main styles: expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative.**

I’ll break each one down with **details, features, and examples:**

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### 1. Expository Writing

**Purpose:** To explain, inform, or teach.

This style is all about presenting facts, logic, and information clearly, without personal opinions.

#### Key Features:

- Objective and neutral tone.
- Organized structure (often with headings, subheadings, or steps).
- Relies on evidence, examples, or data.
- Answers “what,” “how,” or “why.”

#### Examples:

- Textbooks and academic essays.
- News reports (straightforward, fact-based).
- Instruction manuals or “how-to” articles.
- Scientific research papers.

**Sample line:**

“Water boils at 100°C at sea level. This occurs because the vapor pressure of water equals the atmospheric pressure.”

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## 2. Descriptive Writing

**Purpose:** To paint a picture with words.

This style focuses on sensory details (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell) to immerse the reader in an experience.

**Key Features:**

- Uses vivid, sensory language.
- Focuses on mood, tone, or imagery.
- Often includes figurative language (metaphors, similes, personification).
- Less about “facts,” more about creating a strong impression.

**Examples:**

- Poetry.
- Travel writing.
- Character sketches in novels.
- Personal journals.

**Sample line:**

“The golden sunset melted across the horizon, spilling warm light over the quiet town as the scent of freshly baked bread drifted through the air.”

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## 3. Persuasive Writing

**Purpose:** To convince, influence, or inspire action.

This style is about presenting an opinion and backing it up with arguments, logic, and emotional appeals.

### **Key Features:**

- Clear position or viewpoint.
- Evidence and reasoning to support claims.
- Appeals to logic (**logos**), emotions (**pathos**), and credibility (**ethos**).
- Often ends with a call to action.

### **Examples:**

- Political speeches.
- Opinion/editorial columns.
- Advertisements and marketing copy.
- Cover letters or grant proposals.

### **Sample line:**

“Every student deserves access to free Wi-Fi. In a digital age, internet access isn’t a luxury, it’s a necessity for equal education.”

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## **4. Narrative Writing**

**Purpose:** To tell a story or share an experience.

This style follows a structure with characters, plot, conflict, and resolution.

### **Key Features:**

- Has a beginning, middle, and end.
- May be fictional (a novel) or nonfiction (a memoir).
- Focuses on events, characters, and dialogue.
- Can be written in first-person (“I”) or third-person (“he/she/they”).

### **Examples:**

- Novels, short stories, plays.

- Memoirs or autobiographies.
- Personal anecdotes.
- Some journalistic features (like human-interest stories).

### **Sample line:**

“I still remember the day I moved to the city, the rain poured down in sheets, my suitcase broke halfway up the subway stairs, and yet somehow, I felt like I was finally home.”

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### **Why These Styles Matter**

Understanding writing styles helps writers:

- **Match the purpose to the method** (you wouldn't write a love poem the same way you write a lab report).
- **Develop flexibility** (college and professional work requires switching styles often).
- **Engage readers** more effectively by choosing the right tone and approach.

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👉 There are also **sub-styles and blends** (like creative nonfiction, journalistic storytelling, or technical writing), but these four are the foundation that most writing falls into.

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## **Writing Genres (the what)**

Genres are the categories of writing. Same subject, different genre = very different piece.

Subject: Climate Change

- Academic: A research paper analyzing rising sea levels.
- Persuasive: A fundraising campaign calling for renewable energy.
- Narrative: A dystopian short story about life in a flooded New York City.
- Technical: An instruction manual for solar panel installation.

- Journalistic: A feature article interviewing families displaced by wildfires.

See how one topic can look totally different depending on genre?

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## **The Writing Process (yes, even pros do this)**

Nobody writes something perfect the first time. Here's the cycle the best writers follow:

1. Prewriting: Brainstorm, make a messy outline, gather research.
2. Drafting: Write it out, don't worry if it's ugly.
3. Revising: Move ideas around, cut what doesn't work, add detail.
4. Editing: Fix grammar, spelling, formatting.
5. Publishing/Sharing: Turn it in, hit send, post it online, or publish it.

Example: Even bestselling authors go through 10+ drafts. J.K. Rowling rewrote *Harry Potter* chapters dozens of times before the world saw them.

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## **Why Writing Matters**

- Academically: Essays, research papers, exams.
- Professionally: Emails, resumes, reports, proposals.
- Personally: Journals, blogs, social media posts, even texting.
- Creatively: Poems, novels, video games, film scripts.

Writing shapes how people see us. It's a tool for thinking, creating, and connecting.

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## **Final Thought**

Writing is everywhere, from tweets and to-do lists to novels and research papers. It's both an art and a tool. Once you understand why you're writing and who you're writing for, you can adapt your style and genre to fit almost any situation.