

## The Basic Analytical Paper

Typically, an analytical paper presents an examination of an issue or problem or presents an opinion based on fact. The writer analyzes an issue, another piece of writing, an idea, or a question by breaking the topic down into parts or areas that can be supported with various facts and that go together to convince the reader of the validity of the writer's opinion. Generally, three support areas are enough, although this will vary.

The simplest analytical paper consists of approximately five paragraphs, as follows:

1. Introduction, including a thesis statement that identifies both the point to be made and the general areas that support it.
2. Details of first support area.
3. Details of second support area.
4. Details of third support area.
5. Conclusion, often including a summation of the main point or argument.

It is essential for an analysis to have a point; that is, it must say something about which people can reasonably be expected to have differing opinions. A topic such as *battery acid should not be consumed* is not an appropriate one for analysis because, although you may be able to assemble three strong support areas to convince your reader that battery acid should indeed not be consumed, no reasonable reader would maintain that it should be. If, on the other hand, your point is that batteries should be made of non-toxic materials because battery acid enters the water table through landfills, an explanation of the harmful effects of battery acid is entirely justified, since some readers would no doubt maintain that there is not much risk or that such a change would result in a loss of jobs, or some other point of view.

### Some General Considerations

Avoid the use of the second person (the pronoun *you*) in making your point. Although we do this all the time when speaking, it makes for an informal-sounding argument in writing—except in cases such as this handout, in which the analysis is of a process being taught to the reader. The first person (the pronoun *I*) is also taboo unless you are supporting your argument with

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personal experience: Do not say, “I will present the reasons why. . .” or “I feel<sup>1</sup> that there needs to be . . .”

Also stay away from writing that focuses on the writing process (“This paper will explain why batteries should be made of non-toxic materials. . .”) instead of the topic at hand (“Batteries should be made of non-toxic materials because. . .”). Talking about your paper weakens your argument and distracts from the content of your ideas.

Transition phrases such as “Secondly<sup>2</sup>” and “In conclusion” usually will seem awkward to a reader. The order of your argument paragraphs should make sense and follow some kind of organization pattern, such as time sequence or from least to most important; it should be clear why a particular support area is stated second or third, not merely that it is written second or third in the paper.

The connection and relationship between support areas in your paper should be signaled by transition sentences that guide the reader from one point to the next. There are innumerable ways to do this. While they can be useful, don't expect transition words, such as *Furthermore*, *Moreover*, *Next* and *In addition*, to be able to do all the work every time. And a proper conclusion will have a sense of finality, even without a label.

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<sup>1</sup> A special note on *feel*. *Feel* should be reserved for feeling or emotions, and cannot adequately express beliefs or even strong convictions. It is a conversational device we have developed to avoid disagreement in our culture. One cannot, after all, argue against a feeling. If you are expressing an opinion, “I think” or “I believe” is appropriate, but often you’ll find that even these can be eliminated. “I feel” goes with *sad*, *confident*, *sorry*, *rotten*, *pretty*, *good*, *pretty good* and other abstractions, not with “. . . that a tax increase is unnecessary.”

<sup>2</sup> The “adverb” *secondly*, though we hear it all the time, should, of course, be the ordinal *second*. The incorrectness of the adverbial *-ly* becomes obvious when we imagine such transitions as *fifthly* and *eighthly*.

## Mercedes: the Best

Mercedes-Benz is a German automobile manufacturer that produces cars ranging in price from \$30,000 to \$95,000. The cars are numbered in series, the higher numbers representing the bigger, stronger, and more luxurious models. Mercedes-Benz cars, sold worldwide, are considered the best because of their styling, engines, and construction.

The styling of the Mercedes-Benz is its most distinctive feature, and is more enduring than the styles of other cars. American and Japanese cars, for example, become outdated within a couple of years after their introduction, but Mercedes styling remains consistent and attractive for decades. The interior styling of a Mercedes is particularly impressive. Its richly padded seats and dashboard and its precision instrumentation give drivers a feeling of security and luxury. Mercedes-Benz places driver and passenger comfort high on its list of priorities.

The Mercedes-Benz engine is almost as legendary as its styling. Mercedes was a pioneer of diesel technology, and its engines are stronger in horsepower and last longer than those in other types of cars. Mercedes service, though very reliable, is rarely needed on a new car, or even on one a few years old, because the engine is practically trouble free. In the Middle East, where the heat and humidity age a new car so quickly that it appears to be old in two years, only the Mercedes lasts up to four years without requiring a major repair.

After a few years, the Mercedes reveals another advantage that confirms its outstanding reputation. In extreme conditions such as the Middle East or the American Northeast, many American cars become badly rusted and sound as if they are falling apart after just a couple of years. The construction of the Mercedes body and its rust-protective finishes are so superior to other cars that a Mercedes-Benz will show no signs of rust and develop no rattling body parts or sagging doors even after ten years or more in such places.

The Mercedes-Benz, even though it is undoubtedly expensive in terms of initial cost, is really an exceptional value due to the enduring quality of its styling, the reliability of its engine, and the durability of its body construction. These advantages are what make Mercedes-Benz the best car in the world.