

Organizing Essays by Mode

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SIRV is an acronym for **S**ignificance, **I**mportance, **R**elevance, or **V**alue

This chart indicates most common characteristics and should not be followed slavishly. Essays often adopt unique perspectives, sometimes blending modes, making it difficult to clearly identify an essay as a single mode. In general, however, the mode of an essay can be determined by identifying what overarching question the essay seeks to answer.

Mode	Types	Focus	Thesis (SIRV)	Topic Sentences identify	Body Paragraphs	Common Conclusion	Common Supporting Modes	Do not confuse with
Narrative	n/a	crises leading to conflict, usually personal	of conflict	transitions of events leading to crises	narrate and describe crises (images and tone important)	attempt to make sense of conflict	process example	process cause/effect descriptive
Descriptive	n/a	essential nature; main characteristic; enhanced awareness; mood/tone	of dominant impression	details supporting dominant impression	show rather than explain follow time, space, theme, or logical order may develop incrementally	restatement personal SIRV	narrative example comparison /contrast	narrative example
Example	n/a	how examples illustrate the SIRV of topic	of topic	examples	Qualitative examples: analogy, anecdote, allusion, hypothetical Quantitative examples: descriptive, lists	restatement most SIRV example	narrative descriptive comparison /contrast	narrative descriptive classification /division
Process	Prescriptive ----- Descriptive	how to do something ----- how something is done/happens	of process	steps ----- stages	explain steps ----- explain stages	restatement most important SIRV reason for knowing	definition example cause/effect comparison /contrast	narrative descriptive cause/Effect
Classification * ----- Division **	n/a	how items should be grouped ----- how parts contribute to function of whole	of scheme * ----- of system **	classes * or groups ----- parts/ functions	describe characteristics of groups (classes) * and representative members ----- reveal function of parts within whole	restatement most important group ----- restatement SIRV of whole	process description narrative definition example	example ----- process
Comparison /Contrast	Valuation ----- Interpretation ----- Analysis ----- Synthesis	best value of A, B, C ----- how A reveals B ----- relations of A to B ----- how relations of A to B reveal issue	of contrast/ comparison	points of comp/contrast each item to be compared	develop points of comparison/contrast give parallel explanations of each item compared/contrasted SIRV of points of comparison/ contrast to issue	SIRV of making the comparison most important point	narrative descriptive cause/effect definition	example argument

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Cause/Effect	Valuation	value of consequences;	of ultimate cause (effects)	causes effects	explore causes/effects in light of their value;	SIRV of consequences, speculations, warnings, or context Recap major causes or effects	narrative descriptive process definition	process narrative
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	Interpretation	probabilities and inferences;	of ultimate effect (causes)	sequence of causes/effects	explore or infer probable causes/effects			
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Analysis	major causes/effects;	of beginning or ultimate result (causalchain)	of issue	develop causes, effects, or sequence of cause/effect				
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Synthesis	broader implications to be drawn of causes/ effects behind event, occurrence, action, or attitude (issue)	of issue	of issue	tie causes/effects, or sequence of causes/effects to larger context				
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Definition	formal and extended	what something is	of definition	main points explain nature of thing	develop points of definition	restatement most important quality	narration descriptive example comparison/contrast	descriptive narrative example
				steps in exploring meaning	develop process of arriving at definition			
Argument	Debate	favor one option in opposition to others	of option	arguments/ counter-arguments	provide evidence to support arguments; to counter opposing arguments	strength of proposition; call to support	All modes used in support	Any
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	Rogierian	weigh options and recommend strongest	of issue	relative strengths/ weaknesses	analyze strengths/weaknesses analyze relative weights	qualified call for response; request for further study		
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Persuasive	new course of action/new idea	of issue	of issue	reasons support proposed view/ course of action	provide evidence to support proposal; provide anecdotal or human interest support for action or view	plea, often emotional, for support		
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Toulmin	establish a claim	of claim	of claim	data, warrants, backing, rebuttals	evidence; reasons grounds support/guarantee claim; reasons for accepting grounds; identifying/ responding to objections	summation		
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* Three elements to a classification essay: *set* of things being classified; *scheme* (or principle of selection) for classifying set; *classes* into which set is divided.

** Three elements to a division essay: *system* (whole); *principle of analysis* (how parts function in relation to whole); *sub-systems* (parts)