

## OPEN FORM TO CLOSED FORM WRITING STYLES

From *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*  
FIU Custom Edition

### CLOSED FORM

### OPEN FORM

<b>Top Down Thesis Prose</b>	<b>Delayed Thesis Prose</b>	<b>Thesis Seeking Prose</b>	<b>Theme Based Narrative</b>
Thesis explicitly stated in introduction	Thesis appears near end	Essay organized around a question rather than a thesis	Often has an explicit theme rather than a thesis
All parts of essay linked clearly to thesis; top-down structure; topic sentences in every paragraph; transitions between them	Text reads as mystery; through a process, scenarios, or examples-good transitions	Essay organized around a problem or question; writer often tells stories to reveal problem's complexity	Often organized chronologically or has story-like elements; uses literary techniques; often called "literary nonfiction"
Reader is guided throughout a clear structure	Reader held in suspense works to engage the reader into the issue	Reader gets exposed to various sides of looking at a problem	Reader gets transplanted into a plot in which there are scenes that involve issues or conflicts
Contains hard evidence and research (i.e. statistics, surveys)	Evidence from writer's own experience and research from other sources	may provide field research evidence along with personal experience	Contains details that may or may not be based on true events
Structure forecast centered around proving the thesis	Centered around a problem or issue where there is usually a solution suggested	Centered around a problem or theme that the writer may or may not arrive at a thesis or solution	Often used to heighten or deepen a problem or show its human significance
Third person narration	Uses third or first person narration	Uses first, third, and second person narration	Uses mostly first person, but sometimes, third person narration
Analyze, interpret, argue/persuade	Analyze, interpret, explore, inform, persuade	Explore, inquire, inform, explain	Express, share, entertain, explore
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>

Archeological findings published in an anthropological journal	Article found in Newsweek	Article in Cosmo or GQ	Bill Clinton's memoir
Business report presented at a negotiation hearing	Article found in Miami Herald	Discussion forum posted online	Harry Potter books
Published results of a scientific experiment	Biography of a serial killer or a mysterious crime	Journals, diary entries, personal assessments	"How-to" or "Self Help" books

### When to Use Closed Form vs. Open Form Writing

From the *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*

p. 60

#### **Closed Form:**

- when your focus is on the subject matter itself and your goal is to communicate efficiently to maximize clarity. In these cases your aim is to analyze and persuade.
- when you imagine your audience as a busy or harried reader who needs to be able to read quickly and process ideas rapidly; [when you do not know your audience or your audience is serious and formal]
- when the conventional genre for your context is closed form writing and you choose to meet, rather than break, readers' expectations
- when you encounter any ...situation that asks you to assert a thesis in response to a problem or question

#### **Open Form:**

- when you want to delay your thesis rather than announce it in the introduction to create suspense; a delayed thesis structure is less combative and more friendly; it conveys an unfolding "let's think this through together" feeling.
- when your aim is expressive, exploratory, or literary. These aims tend to be served better through narrative rather than through thesis-with-support writing.
- when you imagine a relaxed, [friendly], audience reading primarily for enjoyment and pleasure.
- when the conventional genre calls for autobiographical narratives, character sketches, or personal reflective pieces. Popular magazine articles often have a looser, more open structure than do scholarly articles or business reports.