Drafting an Exploratory Essay

Exploratory papers are NOT argument papers. An exploratory assignment is usually given so that students find ways to branch out in a specific topic without taking a stance. Exploratory papers can range from a full research paper to a short essay.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction should do several things for the reader:

Set context – this is where the author can begin to give general background information and set up a “map” of what the paper will discuss.

State importance – the introduction should also explain why the topic is important, it should compel the audience to read further and create interest in the topic.

State the question or topic of exploration – this can be one or several sentences or questions that states what the author is interested in finding out, why, and how they intend to do it.

THE BODY

An acceptable general structure for exploratory papers is given below:

Each paragraph or section should explain what source was used, say why it was chosen, include information found using the source, explain why the information is important, and reflect on the source and its information.

This format is meant as a basic outline and does not need to be repeated exactly the same way for every source.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is very similar to the introduction in that it gives a general overview of what has been discussed. This section also ties up any loose ends not confronted in the body of the paper. Many times, the question is restated in the conclusion for reinforcement.