**FORMAL ESSAYS** tend to take a serious, evidence-based approach while **INFORMAL ESSAYS** tend to be more relaxed and personable. The style fits the purpose and audience.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTERISTIC** | **MOST FORMAL ESSAYS…** | **MOST INFORMAL ESSAYS…** |
| Audience | Are written for* Academic audiences such as other students or teachers/professors
* Professionals such as historians, psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists
 | Are written for* The general public
* People of certain age group, such as teens or seniors
* People with specific interests such as fishing or fashion
 |
| Purpose/Goal | * Present facts and information gathered through research, experiments, or observation
* Aim to engage readers through logical reasoning, facts, and objective audience
 | * Express the writer’s personal thoughts, feelings, and opinions
* Aim to engage readers by appealing to their senses and emotions
 |
| Subject | * Focus on scholarly topics related to literature, history, and other shared knowledge and events
 | * Focus on everyday topics related to events and experiences in the writer’s life
 |
| Thesis | * Explicitly state the thesis in one or two sentences
* Place the thesis statement in the first or second paragraph
 | * Do not follow hard-and-fast rules related to thesis statements; they may not have a thesis statement; If they do, it may appear anywhere in the essay
 |
| Point-of-View | * Are written in third person
 | * Are written in first person
 |
| Tone | * Have a detached, unemotional tone
* Feels objective
 | * Have a relaxed, sometimes emotional tone
* Feels personal, subjective
 |
| Diction | * Use formal language, professional terminology
* Avoid slang, colloquialisms, and contractions
 | * Use relaxed, often conversational language
* Include slang, colloquialisms, and contracts
 |

Adapted from Van Zoost, et al. *Beyond Five Paragraphs*