

This information should be included on the upper left of your essay's first page:

Artist Name (ex: Jackson Pollock)

Object Title (ex: *Autumn Rhythm*) (Titles should be underlined or *italicized*, and since they're proper nouns, the first letters should be capitalized.)

Year (ex. 1950)

Medium (ex: enamel paint on canvas)

Size (in inches or centimeters)

Location (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Remember that this is an essay and not a research paper, so you do not need to include biographical information and so on. Always keep your focus on the question asked.

Introduce your chosen object by describing what you see from left to right. This is the best way to familiarize your reader with the object, as well as it is an excellent way for you to see more clearly what it is you're going to be analyzing. This will also serve as a natural introduction and prepare you for the deeper analysis. Use objective details, and avoid subjective adjectives. Let your reader decide what's "good" or "boring" – you just provide visual facts. Take your time, and look.

You want to be sure to include a few formal elements in your discussion but only if they are relevant. Line, color, composition, light, space, meaning, and subject are the formal elements we're interested in and discussing in class. Spend time with your object so that you really get familiar with it visually. That may sound obvious, but it's not. Many of us take what we see for granted and don't go deeply enough into the experience. If you have only two sentences for any given element, then you must go back and really look. Either that element has no bearing on your object, or you're not looking closely enough. Remember that all elements don't always apply to every work of art. Light and space, for example, are rarely a part of abstract expressionist painting. Black and white photos do not have color. Write only about what you see, not what you assume.

Use a new paragraph for each new idea.

Avoid asking questions in academic essays. It is your job to provide answers.

PROOFREAD !

Avoid using personal pronouns and subjective language. Remember that this essay is about a selected work of art and not about you. So, if you find that you're referring to yourself, or using words like I, you, they, we, and so on, you need to rewrite your sentence and shift your focus back onto the object.

Academic writing is not about how you feel; it's about how you express your thoughts and ideas usually after gathering information. In art history, that information comes from seeing the object.

Be sure to summarize your essay with at least one concluding paragraph. This paragraph should reiterate your ideas in a more succinct manner and round out the points you've made in your essay.

Additional Essay points and tips in writing stronger academic essays:

1. Capitalize proper nouns.
2. Take care with your spelling.
3. Use apostrophes for possession.
4. Use apostrophes for contractions.
5. Underline (or italicize) titles of works of art, films, novels, magazines, newspapers, journals.
6. Use quotation marks for titles of shorter works like poems, articles, short stories, songs.
7. Be sure to back up your points with specific references to the object.
8. Never psychoanalyze a work of art – aside from the fact that you're not a psychoanalyst, a work of art does not have a psyche.
9. Never psychoanalyze an artist through his or her work of art. Again, you're not qualified, and art is not a therapeutic or auto-biographical exercise.
10. Avoid clichés.
11. Do remain objective in your language and intent.
12. Trust that the image on the screen is the primary image, and really see it. Take your time before responding.
13. Be sure you're answering the question you're being asked to answer.
14. Remember that essays and exams are ways for you to learn.