

Guidelines for Analysis: What It Is and What It Does

Source: *Writing Analytically*, page 82.

1. Avoid deciding what your subject means before you analyze it, and remember that **analysis often operates in areas where there is no one right answer.**
2. As a general rule, **analysis favors live questions** – where something remains to be resolved – over inert answers, places where things are nailed down and don't leave much space for further thinking.
3. As you analyze a subject, ask not just "What are its defining parts?" but also "**How do these parts help me to understand the meaning of the subject as a whole?**"
4. Look for **patterns of repetition and organizing contrasts** in the data, as well as anomalies, and ask yourself questions about what these mean.
5. **Make the implicit explicit:** convert the suggested meanings of particular details into overt statements.
6. When you describe and summarize, **attend carefully to the language you choose** since the words themselves will usually contain the germs of ideas.
7. The analytical process is one of trial and error. Learning to write well is largely a matter of learning how to frame questions. **Whatever questions you ask, the answers will often produce more questions.**