
Cookies in a Jar: Prose in the Exposition Mode

Contributed by Virginia Hunt
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The really great thing about writing Nonfiction in the Exposition Mode (Expository Writing) is that it can be used all alone to explain a situation, or it may be used as a sidebar of information within a larger Narrative work. Here's how you can use expository writing to enhance your book.

How to Write a Book Series Expository Writing Rules

The really great thing about writing Nonfiction in the Exposition Mode (Expository Writing) is that it can be used all alone to explain a situation, or it may be used as a sidebar of information within a larger Narrative work. Because it presents a problematic situation and often opens the door for investigation and conclusion, it is a great and proven way to introduce a longer Narrative essay or article.

Many writers know this mode as the Explanatory Mode and call it that. Either way, Exposition or Explanatory, it is a valuable tool to have in your Nonfiction toolbox of skills.

The Exposition Mode is especially useful when the story involves human error or a misconception that has created a situation.

The following Exposition Mode passage is an introduction to an article on Oregon Coastal State Parks Information Stations and how they service the public.

"The family did not foresee the footpath navigation problems that they encountered as they hiked out to the tip of Cape Lookout. During the late spring season, when the sun begins to shine every day on the Oregon coast, hikers come out in droves. They do not take into account that the ground, and the pathways, are saturated with water from the previous rainy season," said Cape Lookout State Park Ranger Lisa Wells.

"The hikers start out thinking it will be an easy two-mile hike to the end of the cape. Only when they get about a mile out to the tip do they encounter several low-lying areas in the park's hiking trail. These areas are nothing but a big mud pit. Even though the rangers have laid down flat board planks to aid foot travelers in crossing, the boards themselves are beaten down into the mud, and foot traffic gets very slippery.

If the hikers had known of this muddy path problem, they would have worn different shoes, and would have at least brought an extra change of socks for comfort after the hike was completed.

Anyone entering state park hiking trail of any length or moderate difficulty should call the Ranger station of the park they will be hiking. The Rangers are out in the field, checking out the status of the landscape every day. They are generous to offer suggestions which might make the hiking a better experience."

This explanatory passage sets up the rest of the article that illustrates and describes the State Park Ranger's

communication skills and job duties to inform the public. The situation explains why the rangers are needed and sets up the entire article.

There is a hitch, though, with Exposition mode writing. Your explanation has to be justified and verified. Of course, the writer has to be clear, but the Exposition passage must add credibility. If the writer cites and quotes authorities that have expertise in the topic at hand, then the explanation is truly justified. The writer is not just explaining, the writer is offering important information to the readers.

If they are strategically placed, several Exposition passages within an article may greatly increase the validity and usefulness of the article as a communications piece.

Public Information writers use the Exposition Mode quite often when they are writing news stories for public consumption.