English 12 - Personal Essays

-based on one’s personal experiences

-presents writer’s perspective on a topic and usually written in an informal style

-generally uses first-person point of view, but other points of view may be used for effect

-objectives are varied: to argue a point, to provide information, to entertain

-no set rule about the tone of these essays: humorous, serious, nostalgic, confrontational, inspirational, dramatic

**Elements of Style**

**Voice:** what makes the writer’s feelings and assertions come out through the words. For example, a writer’s voice may sound sharp, witty, sarcastic, confused.

"Voice carries the writer's intensity and glues together the information that the reader needs to know. It is the music in writing that makes the [meaning](https://www.thoughtco.com/meaning-semantics-term-1691373) clear" (*Expecting the Unexpected: Teaching Myself--and Others--to Read and Write*, 1989).

**Diction:** The choice and use of your words for effect.

“Sometimes **diction** is described in terms of four levels of language: (1) *formal*, as in serious [discourse](https://www.thoughtco.com/discourse-language-term-1690464); (2) *informal*, as in relaxed but polite conversation; (3) [*colloquial*](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-colloquial-style-1689867), as in everyday usage; (4) [*slang*](https://www.thoughtco.com/slang-english-1692103), as in impolite and newly coined words. It is generally agreed that the qualities of proper diction are [appropriateness](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-appropriateness-communication-1689000), [correctness](https://www.thoughtco.com/correctness-grammar-and-usage-1689807), and accuracy. “(Jack Myers and Don Charles Wukasch, Dictionary of Poetic Terms. University of North Texas Press, 2003)

**Tone:** the expression of a writer's attitude toward [subject](https://www.thoughtco.com/topic-composition-and-speech-1692552), [audience](https://www.thoughtco.com/audience-rhetoric-and-composition-1689147), and self. It is primarily conveyed in writing through [diction](https://www.thoughtco.com/diction-words-term-1690466), [syntax](https://www.thoughtco.com/syntax-grammar-1692182), and level of formality. It is very similar to voice, but voice is used to create the overall tone.

**Syntax:** one of the major components of grammar. It is the proper order of words or a phrase in a sentence. Native speakers of a language learn proper syntax without even realizing it.

"It is syntax that gives the words the power to relate to each other in a sequence...to carry meaning—of whatever kind—as well as glow individually in just the right place"  
(Burgess 1968)

**Figurative Devices: (taken from Thoughtco.com)**

[Alliteration](https://www.thoughtco.com/alliteration-definition-1692387): The repetition of an initial consonant sound. **Example:** She sells seashells by the seashore.

2. [Anaphora](https://www.thoughtco.com/anaphora-figure-of-speech-1689092): The repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses. **Example:** Unfortunately, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time on the wrong day.

3. [Antithesis](https://www.thoughtco.com/antithesis-grammar-and-rhetoric-1689108): The [juxtaposition](https://www.thoughtco.com/juxtaposition-composition-term-1691090) of contrasting ideas in balanced phrases. **Example:** As Abraham Lincoln said, "Folks who have no vices have very few virtues."

4. [Apostrophe](https://www.thoughtco.com/apostrophe-figure-of-speech-1689118): Directly addressing a nonexistent person or an inanimate object as though it were a living being. **Example:** "Oh, you stupid car, you never work when I need you to," Bert sighed.

5. [Assonance](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-assonance-1689142): Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words. **Example:** How now, brown cow?

6. [Euphemism](https://www.thoughtco.com/euphemism-words-term-1690680): The substitution of an inoffensive term for one considered offensively explicit.**Example:**"We're teaching our toddler how to go potty," Bob said.

7. [Hyperbole](https://www.thoughtco.com/hyperbole-figure-of-speech-1690941): An extravagant statement; the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect. **Example:** I have a ton of things to do when I get home.

9. [Irony](https://www.thoughtco.com/irony-figure-of-speech-1691196): The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. Also, a statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea. **Example:** "Oh, I love spending big bucks," said my dad, a notorious penny pincher.

10. [Metaphor](https://www.thoughtco.com/metaphor-figure-of-speech-and-thought-1691385): An implied comparison between two dissimilar things that have something in common. **Example:** "All the world's a stage."

11. [Metonymy](https://www.thoughtco.com/metonymy-figures-of-speech-1691388): A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated; also, the rhetorical strategy of describing something indirectly by referring to things around it. **Example:** "That stuffed suit with the briefcase is a poor excuse for a salesman," the manager said angrily.

12. [Onomatopoeia](https://www.thoughtco.com/onomatopoeia-word-sounds-1691451): The use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to. **Example:** The clap of thunder went bang and scared my poor dog.

13. [Oxymoron](https://www.thoughtco.com/awfully-good-examples-of-oxymorons-1691814): A figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side. **Example:** "He popped the jumbo shrimp in his mouth."

14. [Paradox](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-paradox-1691563): A statement that appears to contradict itself. **Example:** "This is the beginning of the end," said Eeyore, always the pessimist.

15. [Personification](https://www.thoughtco.com/personification-figure-of-speech-1691614): A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is endowed with human qualities or abilities. **Example:** That kitchen knife will take a bite out of your hand if you don't handle it safely.

16. [Pun](https://www.thoughtco.com/pun-word-play-1691703): ​[A play on words](https://www.thoughtco.com/word-play-definition-1692504), sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words. **Example:** Jessie looked up from her breakfast and said, "A boiled egg every morning is hard to beat."

18. [Simile](https://www.thoughtco.com/simile-figure-of-speech-1692098): A stated comparison (usually formed with "like" or "as") between two fundamentally dissimilar things that have certain qualities in common. **Example:** Roberto was white as a sheet after he walked out of the horror movie.

19. [Synecdoche](https://www.thoughtco.com/synecdoche-figure-of-speech-1692172): A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole. **Example:** Tina is learning her ABC's in preschool.

20. [Understatement](https://www.thoughtco.com/understatement-figure-of-speech-1692570): A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker deliberately makes a situation seem less important or serious than it is. **Example:** "You could say Babe Ruth was a decent ballplayer," the reporter said with a wink.