

Transportation in the Twenty First Century”. This paper would group the various transportation types and discuss their common characteristics. It might also delve into the categories’ relative environmental impacts.

6. **Definition.** A definition paper offers up the precise meaning of a specific term. By doing so, it facilitates understanding and gives people common ground to discuss the concept defined. The term being defined must be of sufficient complexity to justify a paper-length discussion. ‘Chair’ would make poor fodder for such a paper but ‘love’ or ‘patriotism’ would give the writer much to write about. Thesis example: “What Is Public Transportation?”.
7. **Description.** More commonly known as ‘reports’, descriptive papers give precise details of impressions and events. Thesis example: “Engine Performance of the Toyota Matrix in Sub-Zero Temperatures”. Such a paper would describe how the engine in question performed under winter driving conditions.



## RHETORICAL MODES FOR RESEARCH PAPERS

When writing a research paper, there are seven rhetorical modes that one can write from within: **process, comparison, cause/effect, argument, classification, definition, and description**. The other rhetorical category, narrative, isn't typically used in a research context. Given a topic such as 'modern modes of transportation' let's see how you might approach the task of formulating an interesting, manageable thesis. It's also well worth noting that no matter which mode you choose as your dominant one, you are free to use others in support of it (ie: argument essays can include definitions and cause/effect reasoning, etc).

1. **Process.** A process paper analyses and *explains how* something is done. Thesis example: "How to Revive Passenger Rail in the West Kootenays in an Age of Energy Uncertainty". The paper would outline a program of action for reintroducing environmentally responsible public transport to the region.
2. **Comparison.** A comparison paper shows relationships between different things. Whether the things under consideration are similar or dissimilar, the comparison should result in a meaningful evaluation. Thesis example: "Electric Versus Hybrid Cars". This paper would compare the two forms of transport and outline the relative merits of each.
3. **Cause/effect.** These papers examine either the causes or the effects of a given phenomenon. One pitfall of this sort of paper is to confuse causes and effects: 'public passivity allows corporate control of media, which causes public passivity'. This sort of thing can get tangled pretty quickly. Thesis example: "Effects of Jet Travel on the Global Environment". This paper would not just list, but analyse and draw appropriate conclusions about the nature of the effects.
4. **Argument.** This sort of paper attempts to persuade someone with significantly different views on a topic to accept your point of view. It is typically the most difficult sort of paper to write successfully. Appeals are made to ethics, logic, and emotion. Two qualities are essential for an argument paper to work: A) the topic must be one about which there is *real* disagreement (not something along the lines of, 'racism is bad') and B) the paper must actively engage one's imaginary opponent, not just insist upon the correctness of the writer's viewpoint (ie: a list of facts that support the thesis). Thesis example: "Canadians should be allowed only one private automobile per household". This paper would make coherent arguments in favour of its thesis yet still acknowledge some aspects of its opponents' views as valid (for example, that such a law would impinge upon personal freedoms).
5. **Classification.** A classification paper groups things into categories. It breaks the topic down into manageable groups and meaningfully discusses the relationships between them. Thesis example: "Electric, Gas, and Human Powered