The Rhetorical Modes

The rhetorical modes are tools for writers to help them develop and organize their writing. Although some works may employ an overarching organizational mode or pattern, writers typically use more than one mode throughout a piece of writing. They often move fluidly between modes depending on the rhetorical situation and the needs that arise from that situation. For example, writers often use exemplification or analogy to support claims in their arguments.

Mode	Purpose	Example Statement
Argument	To persuade your reader to accept your opinion, take some action, or do both about your topic	The U.S. government **should** enforce stricter standards on automobile emissions.
Analogy	To compare topics that typically seem different at first glance (works best if the analogy uses an item familiar to the reader)	Passing legislation through Congress is like a Rubik's cube: all pieces need to align or nothing will be solved.
Exemplification or Illustration	To discuss your topic by using examples to clarify your points	To show his passion for humane care, for instance, he volunteered at the local animal rescue shelters.
Description	To create a picture in words (vivid, specific details) to help the reader visualize something a writer has seen, heard, or done	Its glossy hue sharply contrasts the fuzzy, muted sounds my guitar hums when I rustle its strings.
Narration	To explain information about your topic as a series of events in story format often to demonstrate a theme or significance	"Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything wrong, he was arrested." – Franz Kafka
Comparison and Contrast Analysis	To show how two or more areas of your topic are similar, different, or both	Both of the rivers flow by the city, but the Anacostia River is far more polluted.
Process Analysis	To explain a process by giving directions or information about how to do something or how something is done	First, you make your order; then, you must pay before you can pick up your coffee.
Cause and Effect Analysis	To explain what caused something to happen about a topic or issue	Because the roads were slick from the snow, Paul's car lost traction and slid into the fence.
Problem and Solution Analysis	To inform readers about an issue and offer solutions to that issue	The lack of attention could be resolved by adding variety to the class period.
Classification and Division Analysis	To break your topic into groups of categories and explain them	Originally, writing was divided into three main genres: poetry, prose, and drama.
Definition	To define a word or concept about your topic using synonyms, essential definitions, or extended definitions	Wisdom is intelligence gained not through a book but throughout life.