Regardless of the purpose, most essays have a number of common writing steps.

1. Once you have been given the purpose of the assignment such as to describe or define or argue a topic, decide what subject you are going to develop.

   → Make sure that your topic is not too broad.
   
   “Communication has changed over the years” is too broad and cannot fully be discussed in a short essay or research paper. A more narrowed topic is “The way people send mail has changed since the creation of e-mail.”

   **Adapting the argumentative/persuasive topic:**
   
   → Do not use opinion statements like “I think” or “I believe” because opinion statements are not arguable. Everyone has a right to have an opinion. Use third person.
   
   Argument: Television cartoons encourage children to act aggressively.
   
   Opinion: I think television cartoons encourage children to act aggressively.

   → Choose a topic that your audience would have a concern.
   
   → Choose a topic that you find emotionally interesting.

2. Choose an outline as a guide to structure the layout of your ideas.

   → A standard five-paragraph format essay has been provided for you in this chapter.

3. Write a topic sentence and a thesis statement to begin your essay.

   → The topic sentence is your umbrella statement that your topic discussion will fall under. “The way people send mail has changed since the creation of e-mail.”

   → Follow your topic sentence with a thesis statement that breaks down the topic into three sections. These three sections will be the three body paragraphs of the essay. E-mail has replaced traditional stamped mail because sending e-mail is faster, cheaper, and easier.

4. Gather information like facts, statistics, and background information about your topic.

5. Fill in the format of the outline, including your supporting details.

   → You can use bullets of information or complete sentences in your outline.
6. Write your introduction, beginning with the topic sentence and followed by the thesis statement. Lengthen and strengthen your introduction by adding background information about your topic.

→ The introduction should be your strongest paragraph because it is the foundation of the essay.

→ Do not use announcement statements like “In this essay I am going to discuss.”

Do not use comments like “I think” or “I believe”.

→ Unless you are writing a personal narrative, do not use first person “I”.

Do not use second person “You”.

Use third person “he, she, they, we, people”.

→ Do not ask the reader questions.

7. Write the conclusion, beginning the topic sentence. Restate the main points of the essay.

→ Do not add any ideas that were not discussed in the essay.

→ Leave the reader with something to think about. Do not add questions to your conclusion.

8. Write the body of the essay, using the outline as a guide.

9. Review and revise your essay, correcting any errors prior to final submission.