Form of communication using a set of symbols. Written English has its own techniques and conventions. The content, structure, and style of a piece of writing are guided by its purpose.

Where a piece of writing is narration and is intended to entertain it will often take the form of a story, make use of direct speech, and build up to a climax. Traditionally, narrative is carefully structured and there is likely to be a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end.

An explanation or an analysis in writing is factual and straightforward. Headings and subdivisions may be used for the sake of clarity. Writing intended as persuasion to move the reader to a point of view will often use an emotive style, present lists of points, and include devices of rhetoric (or figures of speech).

The style of a piece of writing varies according to the knowledge of the intended audience, so that text for young children includes simple sentences and basic words, whereas that intended for inclusion in an academic journal is sophisticated in style and vocabulary.

Early writing see alphabet, cuneiform, hieroglyphic. Cuneiform and hieroglyphic writing used ideographs (picture writing) and phonetic word symbols side by side, as does modern Chinese. Syllabic writing, as in Japanese, develops from the continued use of a symbol to represent the sound of a short word. Some 8,000-year-old inscriptions, thought to be pictographs, were found on animal bones and tortoise shells in Henan province, China, at a Neolithic site at Jiahu. They are thought to predate by 2,500 years the oldest known writing (Mesopotamian cuneiform of 3500 BC and Egyptian hieroglyphics of c. 3300–3200 BC).

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