

# Theory

## Definition

1. Theory is a systematic explanation of how or why things are, based on rigorous thinking and analysis.
  - A theory explains how or why. A good theory is based on facts, logic, observations, ideas, etc. Scientific theories explain facts. Other kinds of theories can be based on non-factual evidence, such as literary theories.

## Why It Matters

1. Theories explain how things function or work.
2. Theories explain why things are as they are.
3. Theories help you understand and explain reality.
4. Theories provide models, concepts, and ideas to make sense of reality.
5. Academic writing, also known as analytic writing – or just “thinking” – is based on theoretical thinking. For example, every paper has one thesis. A thesis explains how or why. A good theory must explain, and therefore a good thesis is theoretical, or based in theory.

## How to Use It

1. Start with a focusing question. A focusing question asks how or why.
2. Use rigorous and systematic thinking when writing papers for school.
3. Understand and apply systems thinking. Break things down into parts, see how the parts work together to do more together than they would on their own. See the whole, or how everything fits together. In writing, you will see value in being able to look a whole something, break it into components (parts), and then explain how it fits together into a whole thing.
4. Explore the world of ideas – which is also known as the world of theory and the world of theories.

## Related Terms and Models

1. System
2. Systems thinking
3. Model
4. Process
5. Thesis
6. Levels of Analysis
7. Elements of a system