

## The Progymnasmata

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What does “progymnasmata” mean? “Early exercises”

What are they for?

In classical rhetoric, children would deliver “declamations” or speeches using one of these fourteen exercises. They were for oral practice originally. Contemporary writing programs use them for early writing exercises as well.

What are they?

1. Fable: Retelling of a folk tale
2. Narrative: either fiction or nonfiction
3. Chreia or anecdote: a story based on a famous statement
4. Proverb: an argument for or against a maxim
5. Refutation: disproving the point of a narrative
6. Confirmation: prove the point of a narrative
7. Commonplace: amplification of a virtue or a vice
8. Encomium: praise the virtues of a person or thing
9. Invective: censure the vices of an evil person or thing
10. Comparison: compare two people or things for merit or shortcoming
11. Personification: characterize a fictional person through speech
12. Description: intense and graphic descriptions of a subject
13. Argument: create and support a thesis
14. Legislation: argue for or against a law

\* This list is from Edward P.J. Corbett’s *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*. Other lists can be found on-line or in other books, though they are all similar.

Here is one example of an on-line list:

<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Pedagogy/Progymnasmata/Progymnasmata.htm>